THE PHILOSOPHY OF LOVE

(BHAKTI-SŪTRAS OF DEVARṢI NĀRADA)

HANUMANPRASAD PODDAR

Published by
ORISSA CEMENT LIMITED
Rajgangpur (Distt. Sundargarh) Orissa

First Edition—5000 Copies

(For free distribution)

Printed at
RADHA PRESS
Gandhi Nagar, Delhi-110031

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PREFACE

It was in the year 1916 that I first came across a Bengali edition of the aphorisms of Devarṣi Nārada. I was then living in seclusion in a distant corner of Bengal, and, through the grace of God, developed some interest in spiritual practices. The aphorisms of the Devarsi proved very helpful to me in those practices. While I was studying these aphorisms, I felt an inclination to write out a running commentary on them. In due course a commentary was actually written; but there was then neither the urge nor the facility to bring it out in a bookform. About the year 1920, when I was in Bombay, I casually mentioned to late Seth Khemrājji, the proprietor of Śrī Venkateśwara Press, about this commentary, and he very eagerly took the manuscript from me and gave it for publication to the Press; but there, owing to inadvertence, it remained buried for years under other manuscripts. As I had no particular urge in the matter, I gave him no reminder. Khemrājji passed away. And several years after his death I got the manuscript back from Bombay. I had no mind to get it printed. For I felt it was an act of supererogation on my part to write a commentary on a treatise on Bhakti. But this Sāttvic feeling of diffidence and hesitation gradually wore off as I came into some prominence and the publication of the book was eventually decided upon. After revision and some amount of alterations, it appeared as a series in the Hindī 'Kalyāṇ', from which a Hindi edition of the book was brought out. The present edition in English is a translation of the Hindī edition and has serially appeared in the 'Kalyāṇa-Kalpataru'.

When this commentary was first written in 1916, there were hardly more than one or two commentaries of the book either in Hindī or in English. But now several commentaries on it are available in the market. In these circumstances, there can be only two reasons for bringing out this separate edition - (1) a covert desire for name, and (2) expectation of spiritual gain through a critical study of the philosophy of Bhakti. The fact of the matter is, the more the subject of Bhakti is discussed, the more do we gain spiritually. For the attainment of Divine Love, the practice of Bhakti is the foremost discipline, and as an end it is this Bhakti which manifests itself as Divine Love. From this point of view, I hope, devout and learned readers will not wholly denounce this attempt and will forgive my impertinence and errors. In Love, it is the sentiment which is more important than language. Though I am not at all qualified to write anything by way of a commentary on Bhakti, I have every hope that the generous reader will hail this attempt of mine believing that there must be some divine purpose, some play of Divine Grace, behind the urge which compelled me to undertake this task. For without Divine Grace, one cannot feel the urge to do any good work. That critical study of the philosophy of Bhakti is a most desirable and profitable work cannot be gainsaid. For in the course of this study I have had naturally to describe the glories of God, the supernatural character of Divine Love and the means of attaining it, and to repeat mentally the sacred Names of God, which must have induced a spray of Bhakti even in this dry heart totally devoid of that sentiment. We must put implicit faith in the words of a high-souled devotee who said that through the remembrance and chanting of the Names and glories of God even the most sinful heart gets purified and becomes innocent like the heart of a child. The chanting of the glories and Names of God completely washes out the impurities of the heart and flooding it with pure and blissful divine sentiments helps in the fulfilment of the highest object of life. The scripture says:-

महापातकयुक्तोऽपि ध्यायन्निमिषमच्युतम् ।
पुनस्तपस्वी भवति पङ्क्तिपावनपावनः ॥

> "By meditating on God even for a moment the most sinful person becomes pure and acquires the capacity to sanctify even those who purify by their very presence."

Moreover what has been written by way of commentary in this volume is only a digest for what I have gathered from different saints and holy men and there is nothing in it which I can call my own. I would therefore request the reader to overlook my faults and focus his attention on the personality of the Devarṣi, his inspired aphorisms and the teachings of scriptures and saints embodied in the commentary. These aphorisms have been recognized as a system of philosophy similar to the six systems associated with the names of Kaṇāda, Gautama and so on. The devotees call it the seventh system. Those alone, who possess real wisdom and knowledge of Truth are really qualified to attain Divine Love. In the course of these eighty-four aphorisms, the Devarṣi has clearly brought out the philosophy of Bhakti, the hindrances to the growth of Bhakti, the means of attaining Bhakti, and the glory of Bhakti and the Bhaktas. It is true, these aphorisms contain an exposition of Bhakti as directed towards a Personal God, but this should not lead one to imagine that there is any antagonism between Knowledge and Devotion as described in these aphorisms. On the contrary, citing the example of the Gopis, the Devarṣi has proved that they were conscious of the divinity of their Beloved Lord. Without Knowledge of God, how can one develop Love for Him? And it is equally true that the secret of the Beloved can be known only through intimate, exclusive, constant and unalloyed Love. Therefore, one should not conceive any opposition between Jñāna (Knowledge) and Bhakti (Devotion) in these aphorisms. Similarly, Bhakti as described here is not opposed to Karma (the path of Action) either. Nay, the performance of disinterested action for the sake of God has been enjoined in these Sutras. And even the devotee who has wholly renounced action, can never renounce the act of constant and loving remembrance of God. Therefore, in the Bhakti as described by the Devarṣi, there is place for both Jñāna and Karma; only they must be conformable to Bhakti. There is no room in it for the dry as dust type of Jnana and Karma. It is Rasa (joy) and Rasa alone which surrounds it on all sides and permeates it. God Himself is Rasa personified and it is Rasa which is the abode of supreme bliss. The Śruti also says:-

'रसो वै सः। रसं ह्येवायं लब्ध्वानन्दी भवति।'

It is through Bhakti alone that one can perceive God, the embodiment of Rasa; through Bhakti alone one can attain the supreme bliss; which even sages and seers, and gods can scarcely attain. Therefore, all should take recourse to Bhakti and Bhakti alone. The Bhāgavata says:-

> "The life of man is frittered away with the daily rising and setting of the sun; only the time that is spent in discoursing upon Śrī Hari is usefully spent. Do not trees live, do not the bellows also breathe? And do not the

domestic beasts and other animals live, eat and procreate? He who has never heard the glories of Śrī Kṛṣṇa is worse than a beast. The ears of one who does not hear the stories of Śrī Kṛṣṇa are like holies in which snakes dwell; the tongue of one who does not sing the praises of Śrī Kṛṣṇa is useless like that of the frog. The head that does not bow to Śrī Hari is only a burden though adorned with silk turban or a crown, the hands that never worship Śrī Hari are similar to those of a dead man, although they may be adorned with ornaments of gold. The eyes that do not behold the image of God are like the eyes on the plumes of the peacock; the feet that do not take one to sacred places are like unto the roots of trees. He who never bathes his body in the dust of the feet of the Lord's devotees, is virtually dead even though alive; he who has never inhaled the fragrance of Tulasi leaves offered on Śrī Hari's feet, is as good as dead, although he may be breathing. The heart which does not melt with the utterance of Śrī Hari's Name as indicated by the effusion of tears and horripilation, etc., is adamant, indeed."

In conclusion, I humbly and earnestly

entreat all devotees to bless me so that my mind may get exclusively attached to the lotus-feet of the Lord. For, says the Bhāgavata -

> "Man is apprehensive about his possessions and his dear and near ones and is in the clutches of sorrow, desire and greed, and the erroneous notion. 'This is mine'. 'This is mine' which is the root of all suffering, only till he has not taken shelter under Your feet which are free from all fear." (III.ix.6)

HANUMANPRASAD PODDAR

DEVARṢI NĀRADA

अहो देवर्षिर्धन्योऽयं यत्कीर्तिं शार्ङ्गधन्वनः ।
गायन्माद्यन्निदं तन्त्र्या रमयत्यातुरं जगत् ॥

(Srīmad Bhāgavata I. vi. 39)

> "O Blessed is, indeed, Devarṣi Nārada, who goes about playing on his Vīna, singing the praises of Śri Harī and through the intoxication of that song scatters joy throughout the afflicted world!"

Kāraka Puruṣas (Agents of God) appear on earth for the good of the world in the same manner as God Himself takes His incarnation. Their natural function is to prepare the ground for the sports of the Lord, and bring together appropriate materials for his sports. Such Mahāpuruṣas (great souls), though liberated themselves, do not make use of their privilege of salvation, and move about in the world among ordinary souls for the latter's spiritual welfare. Although this function of theirs continues at all times without any break, yet during the advent of some special incarnations their activities become more pronounced and more intense. They live their auspicious lives for the highest good of the world. Absolutely devoid of ignorance, egoism, sense of 'Mine' and attachment to worldly objects, etc. these Mahāpuruṣas act as instruments under the control of God. All their activities are, in fact, activities of God Himself. Devarṣi Nārada is a Mahāpuruṣa (great soul) of this type. He is present in all the Yugas, and has free access to all the regions of creation, all scriptures, all societies and all activities of man. He was present in the Satyayuga and also in the Yugas of Treta and Dwāpara, and it is said, that even in this dark age of Kali qualified souls are now and then blessed with his Darśana (sight). From the highest region like Goloka, Vaikuṇṭha, the region of Brahmā, etc. to the lowest like Tala, Atala down to Pātāla, he is free to move without any restriction. Through the power of Yoga, he can go wherever he likes in the twinkling of an eye. He is mentioned in all the scriptures, such as, the Vedas, the Smṛtis, the Purāṇas, the Saṃhitās, as well as in the ancient books on Astronomy, Music, etc. From Bhagavān Viṣṇu Himself, Śiva and other Devas down to the terrible Rākṣasas all show him honour and respect and give him their confidence. While on the one hand, the Lord of Devas, Indra, shows deference to his opinion, on the other Kayādhu, wife of Hiraṇyakaśipu, who was a sworn enemy of the gods, trusting his words regards herself protected in his Āśrama. While on the one hand, he is observed delivering instructions on the Supreme Truth even to Mahāpuruṣas like Vyāsa, Vālmīki and Śukadeva, on the other he is found engaged in the attempt to create misunderstanding and quarrel between two rival parties. But really speaking, he does nothing for himself. He takes up a work when he finds that this will lead to some good to somebody, or when he observes it as a beautiful act of the drama of divine sport. The misunderstandings and quarrels he creates are all intended for the good of the world and with a view to help forward the sport of the Lord. This is so because every act of his is verily an act of God. Truly speaking, he should be regarded as the very 'Mind' of God Himself; this may be clearly revealed through the grace of God when the personality of the Devarṣi is deeply pondered over. There are some writers who contend that there were several Ṛṣis bearing the name of Nārada among whom the following seven are considered to be principal:- (1) Brahma's son, born out of his mind; (2) maternal uncle of Parvata Ṛṣi; (3) brother of Arundhatī (wife of Vaśiṣṭha), and husband of Satyavatī; (4) the master in the art of carrying tales and creating quarrels among people; (5) a courtier of Kubera; (6) one among the eight scriptural authorities in the court of Sri Rāmachandra; and (7) a member who participated in the sacrifice of snakes performed by King Janamejaya.

We have neither the desire to enter into a controversy whether there was one Nārada or many, nor do we possess the qualification to arrive, through discussion, at the truth about the matter. In our view, we see one and only one Nārada, who performed different acts, as the instruments of God, in the different Kalpas and Yugas, and who is engaged in performing the same even today. It is our intention on the present occasion to say something about that aspect of the Devarṣi's activities which has relation with the propagation of Bhakti (Devotion). Really speaking that is the primary function of the Devarṣi. Although learned in all the scriptures and master and teacher of all the truths, in the end the Devarṣi instructs only on Devotion. It was he who inspired Vālmīki, Vyāsa, Śukadeva, Prahlāda, Dhruva and other great souls to engage themselves in the practice of Devotion. Not only this, with the Vīna in hand and singing the sacred Divine Names, he moves about freely and fearlessly in all Yugas and in all societies, purifying men and women throughout creation and drawing their hearts towards God. The Devarṣi himself has described the incidents of his life during two Kalpas. The portion of the Bhāgavata bearing this description is extremely interesting. For my own as well as the reader's delectation a summary of the same is given below:-

Maharṣi Vyāsa, possessed of the supernatural vision, divided the Vedas into four parts for the benefit of the people at large. He composed the Mahābhārata, which is full of ancient stories and is known as the fifth Veda. He brought forth the Purāṇas. Thus though he had done all he could for the spiritual good of all beings, he was not quite satisfied, his heart was not completely at peace; he felt within himself that there was something lacking. In a somewhat dejected mood he went to the bank of the river Saraswatī, and having seated himself there began to reflect as follows: "I have done all I could, and yet why do I feel something lacking within me? Have I failed to deal at length with that aspect of Dharma, which is known as Bhāgavata Dharma? This Bhāgavata Dharma is the dearest object of God and of His beloved Paramahaṃsa devotees." No sooner did these thoughts arise in his mind there appeared before him Devarṣi Nārada with a happy countenance, singing the praises of Śri Hari. After mutual greetings and exchange of courtesies, Maharṣi Vyāsa described his mental condition to the Devarṣi and asked the latter about the remedy. Thereupon, Devarṣi Nārada said:-

"O best of Munis! In all your books, you have not sung the praises of God to the extent you described the other aspects of Dharma. That is why your mind is covered with the cloud of dejection. Words or poems which do not describe the glories of God, though they are soft, sweet and full of poetic beauty are known as Kākatīrtha (sacred to the crow) by men of wisdom, who know what is true and what is false. That is to say, such poems attract the mind of lustful men attached to the gross enjoyments of the world, who belong to the same category as the crow which delights in pecking at ordure, but they cannot attract the Bhāgavatas and Paramahaṃsas, who are like the swan floating on the sacred Mānasa lake. But words which contain a discussion on the Divine Name and Divine glories are regarded as supremely delightful and capable of destroying the sins of men though they may sound harsh to the ear, may be devoid of poetic embellishments, or may even be full of grammatical errors. Therefore, all men of virtue and Mahātmās make it a point to hear, repeat or sing words which express the Divine Names and glories. O chief of Munis, you are unerring in your vision, there is nothing concealed from you. Now, therefore, you describe the sports of Śrī Hari for the good of the world. Men learned in the scriptures have pointed out that the supreme fruit of man's austerities, practice of 'hearing', performance of daily obligatory rites and possession of a sharp intellect lies only in describing with reverence the glories of Śrī Hari. Please hear the story of my previous birth and then reflect what a change was effected in me through the practice of hearing of the glory of Śri Hari.

"O great Muni, I was the son of a female servant in my former birth. During a certain rainy season a large number of Mahātmās came to our village to spend their four months of obligatory rest. I was a small child at the time and my mother engaged me in the service of those Mahātmās. I never exhibited any form of childishness in the presence of those Mahātmās; giving up my plays I began to spend quietly all my time at their feet, and I was very sparing in the use of words. These are the reasons why though looking upon all with an equal eye, the Mahātmās were pleased with me and began to show me exceptional kindness. As ordered by them I used to eat the leavings of food left by them on leaves after they had partaken from the same. The effect of this was that all my sins were destroyed. Through the continuity of this practice for some time my heart became pure, and I began to take relish in the Dharma practised by them (Bhāgavata-Dharma). The Mahātmās used to discourse on the stories of Śri Kṛṣṇa every day and through their kindness I used to hear those beautiful stories with reverence. When I had done this for some time I developed Bhakti (Devotion) to God. O chief of Munis, at the first stage I began to take relish in God, and then my understanding became steady and firm. With the help of that pure and firm understanding and established in my undefiled form of supreme Brahma beyond Māyā, I began to perceive the whole of this real and unreal creation as an imaginary projection through Māyā. Throughout the rains and autumn those Mahatmas continued to sing the stainless glories of God, hearing which there grew within my heart the Sāttvic type of Bhakti which is destructive of the other two Guṇas, viz., Rajas and Tamas. At the time of their leaving the village those Mahātmās who were ever kind to the poor and distressed, finding me to be attached to them, sinless and possessing reverence and control over the senses, delivered to me the most secret knowledge which was delivered by God Himself, through which I came to understand the power of the Māyā of Lord Vāsudeva, an understanding which leads to the attainment of the supreme state of God-realization.*

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* Following the above order laid down by Devarṣi Nārada Madhusudana Saraswati, the famous commentator of the Gītā has divided Bhakti into eleven stages in his book entitled Bhakti-Rasāyana. Thus:-

"The Mahātmās, then went away, and I continued to practise Bhajana as instructed by them. I was the only child of my mother, hence she was extremely attached to me. She knew me to be her only refuge in life. One day a deadly snake sent, as if, by the God of

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प्रथमं महतां सेवा तद्दयापात्रता ततः ।
श्रद्धाथ तेषां धर्मेषु ततो हरिगुणश्रुतिः ॥
ततो रत्यङ्कुरोत्पत्तिः स्वरूपाधिगतिस्ततः ।
प्रेमवृद्धिः परानन्दे तस्याथ स्फुरणं ततः ॥
भगवद्धर्मनिष्ठातः स्वस्मिंस्तद्गुणशालिता ।
प्रेम्णोऽथ परमा काष्ठेत्युदिता भक्तिभूमिकाः ॥

1. Personal service of Mahāpuruṣas. 2. Acquiring of qualifications so as to draw their compassion. 3. Faith in the Dharma practised by them. 4. Hearing the Divine glory with reverence. 5. From hearing growth of the germ of Divine Love. 6. Divine Love leading to Self-realization. 7. Self realization leading to increase of Love in the supreme embodiments of Bliss. 8. Through increase of Love germination of supreme Bliss. 9. Firm adherence to Bhāgavata Dharma. 10. Development of the qualities of Bhāgavata within the devotee. 11. Attainment of the highest stage of Love. This is how the eleven stages have been described.

Death bit her, and this caused her death. I regarded the incident as an act of special grace-arranged by God, who ever seeks to do good to His devotees, and leaving the village began to travel towards the north. Reaching a dense forest, I came upon a Peepul tree on the bank of a river, sitting under which I collected my mind and began to meditate with reverence on the lotus-like feet of the Lord. At that time my eyes were filled with tears of joy through excess of Love. I observed that Lord Śri Hari had revealed Himself in my heart. The sight of God swelled the flow of Love into a flood. The hair of my body stood erect through excess of emotion. I totally lost myself in the ocean of bliss and forgot all about the world and even the consciousness of my own existence.

"Then, suddenly, that extremely beautiful and captivating Form vanished from before me. This caused me terrible sorrow. I attempted, again, to have the sight when I heard a voice from heaven saying:- 'O child, you cannot regain My sight in the present birth; I revealed Myself now before you in order to increase your Love. Through the influence of Satsanga, even for a short while, you have developed strong devotion to Me. When you leave your present body, you will be one very near and dear to Me, your understanding will be unshakably attached to Me, and through My grace, you will remember the incidents of your present birth even after the termination of this Kalpa.' Thus I learnt that I had gained the favour of God; so bowing myself low to the ground, I left the place and began to move about in the world thoroughly gratified, giving up egoism and jealousy and cultivating innocence; remembering, and singing loudly, without any delicacy, the most secret and blessed Names and glories of the Lord. Attaching my mind to Śri Kṛṣṇa, I gave up association with the world. In course of time, that body of mine got destroyed and I attained the pure, divine body of a companion of God.

"At the end of the Kalpa, I entered the heart of Brahmā through His breath when He lay down on the ocean of dissolution, withdrawing the entire creation within Himself. At the end of a thousand Yugas, when Brahmā began to recreate the world, I came out from His breath with Marīchi and the other Ṛṣis.

"Since then, observing the vow of Brahmacharya, I move about the three regions, both inside and out - wherever I like. Through the grace of God, my admittance is nowhere restricted. I go every where singing the praises of Hari to the accompaniment of this Vīṇā which is adorned by Brahma in the form of sound, and is a gift from God Himself. God's compassion on me is so infinite that whenever I merge myself in Divine Love and sing on His sports, that very moment He appears before me and gives me the privilege of His sight, just as an ordinary person appears when called aloud.

"Repetition of Śrī Hari's Name is like a strong barge to those who are deeply attached to worldly enjoyments to take them across the ocean of existence. That is why I move about singing constantly the praises of Śrī Hari for the good of the world as well as my own. Through Yoga and other practices the minds of men attached to the world cannot be so quickly pacified as through the practice of Bhajana of Śrī Hari." Saying this, the Devarṣi started from the place singing the Name of Śrī Hari.

According to the Mahābhārata, Devarṣi Nārada possessed knowledge of all the truths of the Vedas, was honoured and venerated by the Devas, was a specialist in Itihāsas and Purāṇas, was acquainted with facts of previous Kalpas, knew the laws of Dharma, was exceptionally learned in the sciences of Vedic pronunciation and grammar, was a master of music, knew how to decide between two conflicting scriptural injunctions, was fully capable of analysing words, was an eloquent speaker, was wise, possessed of a good memory, possessed of high morality, was a poet, a man of wisdom, capable of coming to a conclusion after scrutinizing all evidences, capable of removing the doubts of learned men similar even to Bṛhaspati, knew the truths of Dharma, Artha, Kāma and Mokṣa, possessed a direct vision of all the regions of creation through his power of Yoga, recognized those who were qualified for Mokṣa, created quarrels for the good of the world, was a master in the arts of forming alliances and of war, was capable of arriving at truth through inference, was a complete master of all the scriptures, an expounder of laws, a repository of all qualifications and a man of infinite power and brilliance. He was the very embodiment of knowledge, a store-house of learning, the very aggregate of bliss, sustainer of good conduct (सदाचार), unmotived lover of all souls, a natural friend of the universe, a great teacher of Devotion and the very embodiment of Devotion. After finishing his instruction on every other subject, the Devarṣi by saying, " अथातो भक्तिं व्याख्यास्यामः " takes up Bhakti (Devotion) as the last and final subject of instruction. This proves that Bhakti occupies a very high place in his estimation.

Bowing to the feet of Devarṣi Nārada who moves about the three worlds singing the praises of Śrī Hari out of sheer unmotived kindness to Jīvas (souls), let us carefully read his instructions on his beloved subject of Bhakti (Devotion) and try to mould our lives according to the same.

-e§§eancillary even to Upāsanā, knew the truths of Dharma, Artha, Kāma and Mokṣa, possessed a direct vision of all the regions of creation through his power of Yoga, recognized those who were qualified for Moksha, created strife for the good of the world, was a master in the arts of fostering alliance and of war, was capable of arriving at truth through inference, was a complete master of all the scriptures, an expounder of laws, a repository of all qualifications and a man of infinite power and brilliance. He was the very embodiment of knowledge, a store-house of learning, the very aggregate of bliss, a treasure of good conduct, ' सर्वप्रिय ' (universally loved) lover of all, a natural friend of the universe, a great teacher of Devotion and the very embodiment of Devotion. After imparting his instructions on every other subject, the Devarṣi by saying " अथातो भक्तिं व्याख्यास्यामः " takes up Bhakti (Devotion) as the last and final subject of instruction. This proves that Bhakti occupies a very high place in his estimation.

1. Bowing to the feet of Devarṣi Nārada who moves about the three worlds singing the glories of Śrī Bhagavān out of sheer unmerited kindness to Jīvas (souls), let us now carefully read his instructions on the beloved subject of Bhakti (Devotion) and try to mould our lives according to the same.

THE PHILOSOPHY OF LOVE

(Bhakti-Sūtras of Devarṣi Nārada)

BHAKTI MANIFESTED AS DIVINE LOVE

अथातो भक्तिं व्याख्यास्यामः ॥ १ ॥

1. NOW, WE SHALL EXPOUND (THE CULT OF) BHAKTI (DEVOTION).

The application of the words 'अथ' and 'अतः' in the aphorism indicates that the great apostle of Bhakti cult, the crest-jewel of devotees, the ocean of mercy, the great Devarṣi, who is uninterruptedly engaged in rendering good to the world at large, having already expounded the other cults and disciplines, is now entering on a discussion of the supremely blessed character of Bhakti (Devotion) and the means of attaining it for the good of humanity.

सा त्वस्मिन्* परमप्रेमरूपा ॥ २ ॥

2. THAT (DEVOTION) IS SUPREME LOVE DIRECTED TOWARDS GOD.

Various forms of Devotion have been detailed in the scriptures, but the one which Devarṣi Nārada is going to discuss is characterized as Love. To develop exclusive Love for God is Devotion. 'Exclusive Love' denotes that blessed state in which the mind ceases to rely on disciplines such as Jñāna and Karma (Knowledge and Action), and free from all desires, is exclusively devoted to God, when the mind withdraws itself from all objects of this world and all enjoyments of the next world, and even from the bliss of beautitude, and is solely attached to the supreme object of Love, namely God, and when all the attraction and attachment that we have for other objects is transferred to the only dearest object, God.

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* Some read ' कस्मै ' for ' त्वस्मिन् '.

अमृतस्वरूपा च ॥ ३ ॥

3. IT IS (ALSO) NECTAREAN IN CHARACTER.

This exclusive Love for God is real nectar, it is the sweetest thing that can be possessed by a soul: whoever gets it attains immortality. Worldly desire is equivalent to death. Within the heart of the devotee, who has developed this exclusive Love, no trace of any other desire remains except the pure ever-growing desire of tasting this Love more and more. It is this extremely rare desire which makes him an instrument in the sports of the Lord, sports which enchant even the hearts of sages, and extricates him from the whirligig of births and deaths in which he was caught through the binding force of Karma. He lives constantly in the presence of God, and God, too, ever remains by his side. This eternal, inseparable union between the devotee in the path of Love and his object of Love, viz., God, is true immortality. That is why ignoring salvation, devotees always crave for devotion (Bhakti).*

यल्लब्ध्वा पुमान् सिद्धो भवति, अमृतो भवति,
तृप्तो भवति ॥ ४ ॥

4. ON ATTAINING THIS SUPREME LOVE (WHICH IS, IN CHARACTER, NECTAREAN) MAN ATTAINS SIDDHI - PERFECTION - AND IMMORTALITY, AND GETS THOROUGHLY SATISFIED.

He alone who has drunk the nectar of Divine Love is a Siddha (has attained perfection). The word 'Siddhi' here does not mean possession of supernatural powers mentioned in Yoga. Let alone these powers the devotee in the path of Love seeks not even the highest Siddhi or achievement known as Mokṣa or liberation. The Siddhis promised in Yoga eagerly look forward to an opportunity to serve such a devotee, but he always rejects them, inasmuch as he looks upon them as something very insignificant as compared to Divine Love. The Lord Himself says:-

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* असि बिचारि हरि भगत सयाने । मुक्ति निरादर भगति लुभाने ॥

-Tulasīdas

न पारमेष्ठ्यं न महेन्द्रधिष्ण्यं
न सार्वभौमं न रसाधिपत्यम् ।
न योगसिद्धीरपुनर्भवं वा
मय्यर्पितात्मेच्छति मद्विनान्यत् ॥

(Śrimad Bhāgavata XI. xiv. 14)

"A loving devotee of Mine who has dedicated his self to Me seeks nothing besides. Me - neither the position of Brahmā (Creator of the Universe) the seat of Indra (the Lord of Heavens), sovereignty over the whole earth, lordship over the nether world, the Siddhis of Yoga, nor even Mokṣa (liberation) attained through identity with Me."

A devotee says:-

"While I am engaged in the loving worship of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the hairs of my body stand on end, and the mind is filled with rapture. Tears of joy flowing from the eyes enhance the beauty of my face and faltering words interrupted by sobs add to the sweetness of my voice. Thus, I have not a moment's leisure to look to

> anything else. I, therefore, wonder why the four types of salvation (सालोक्य, सामीप्य, सारूप्य and सायुज्य) stand at my door eagerly waiting to serve me as handmaids."*
>
> (Bodhasāra)

Should the devotee condescend to accept sense-enjoyments and salvation, the powers regulating enjoyments and salvation will consider it a proud privilege to serve him, but the devotee does not care even to look at them.

हरिभक्तिमहादेव्याः सर्वा मुक्त्यादिसिद्धयः ।
भुक्तयश्चाद्भुतास्तस्याश्चेटिकावदनुव्रताः ॥

(Nārada Pāñcharātra)

> "Siddhis like salvation and the various forms of enjoyment of the rare type engage themselves as handmaids to serve the great goddess of devotion (of Śrī Hari)."

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* रोमाञ्चेन चमत्कृता तनुरियं भक्त्या मनो नन्दितं
प्रेमाश्रूणि विभूषयन्ति वंदनं कण्ठं गिरो गद्गदाः ।
नास्माकं क्षणमात्रमप्यवसरः कृष्णार्चनं कुर्वतां
मुक्तिर्द्वारि चतुर्विधापि किमियं दास्याय लोलायते ॥

The great devotee Kāka-Bhuśuṇḍi says:-

> "Just as water cannot be retained except in a basin, whatever means you may adopt to retain it, even so, O chief of birds (Garuḍa) the bliss of beatitude cannot exist apart from Devotion to Śrī Hari."*
>
> (Rāmacharitamānasa)

That is why the term 'Siddhi' in the above text should be construed to mean complete self-gratification through Supreme Realization. The devotee never feels the want of anything. All his desires get fully satisfied by securing the loving affection of his dearest Lord. His immortality lies in this complete satisfaction of desire. Till a person attains this state of complete satisfaction, till he is absolutely free from desires, he has to go through the process of repeated births and re-births under the propelling force of Karma. The devotee whose desires are completely satisfied directly perceives the sportive hand of the Lord both in the creative and the destructive process, and begins to regard death itself as a sport. In fact, Death itself is dead to him. Apart from the sport of the Lord, no such terrible thing as Death exists within his consciousness; that is why he feels completely satisfied. As long as the objects of the world, appear to possess an independent existence of their own apart from the sport of the Lord, so long does man experience them either as pleasurable or painful, and remains unsatisfied through constant desire for possession of newer and newer objects of pleasure. When, however, he attains the source and fountain of all, when he realizes the essence and totality of all then his heart refuses to be drawn towards objects which appear incomplete and only as pasts. He attains complete satisfaction through realization of the Whole.

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* जिमि थल बिनु जल रहि न सकाई ।
कोटि भाँति कोउ करै उपाई ॥
तथा मोच्छ सुख सुनु खगराई ।
रहि न सकइ हरि भगति बिहाई ॥

यत्प्राप्य न किञ्चिद्वाञ्छति न शोचति न द्वेष्टि
न रमते नोत्साही भवति ॥ ५ ॥

5. ON ATTAINING WHICH (DEVOTION IN THE FORM OF LOVE) MAN NEITHER CRAVES FOR ANYTHING, NOR GRIEVES (OVER ANY LOSS), NEITHER HATES NOR DELIGHTS (IN ANY OBJECT), NOR DOES HE FEEL ANY URGE (FOR THE ACQUISITION OF SENSE-ENJOYMENTS).

The devotee in the path of Love attains that supreme and exalted thing, on attainment of which all other desires cease to exist. Earthly power and pelf, love, beauty, strength, fame, knowledge and dispassion, all that we treasure in this world, and which all men, whether worldly-minded or otherwise, long to possess according to their taste and temperament, appear altogether insignificant and worthless when compared with that invaluable possession called Divine Love. The aggregate of all these possessions scattered over the whole universe is only like a drop of water as compared to God, who is an infinite ocean of all these possessions, what value can these worldly possessions have in the face of that Love which attracts God Himself to its possessor?

Śrī Śukadeva says:-

यस्य भक्तिर्भगवति हरौ निःश्रेयसेश्वरे ।
विक्रीडतोऽमृताम्भोधौ किं क्षुद्रैः खातकोदकैः ॥

(Śrīmad Bhāgavata VI. xii. 22)

"He who is devoted to Bhagavān Śrī Hari, the Lord and repository of supreme good, sports in the ocean of nectar. He cannot feel drawn towards the enjoyments either of this world or the next, which are like the turbid water of a muddy pool."

Why should the devotee merged in the nectarean ocean of Love crave for other objects?

The devotee craves not for sense-enjoyments or liberation, etc., much less does he mourn the loss of any of his possessions. He regards such losses as an aspect of the Divine sport, that is why he remains merged in bliss at all times and, under all conditions. Nay, even if, in the pursuit of Divine Love, he has to forego liberation, which establishes identity with God, he does not feel sorry; on the contrary, he constantly desires that his Love for the Lord may grow from more to more, even though he may have to undergo repeated births for the same. Goswāmī Tulasīdās says in his Vinaya-Patrikā:-

> "I crave not for salvation, wisdom, worldly possessions, affluence, supernatural powers or extensive glory. Let me have only unmotived Love for the feet of Śrī Rāma which may grow from more to more every day."*

He does not likewise entertain hatred for any creature, or aversion for any object or circumstance which may be loathsome or adverse in the eyes of the world. He visualizes his own Lord in every creature, and the sport of the Lord in every object and circumstance, and feels delighted every moment of his life. Says Goswāmī Tulasīdās:-

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* चहौं न सुगति सुमति संपति कछु रिधि-सिधि बिपुल बड़ाई।
हेतुरहित अनुरागु रामपद बढ़ अनुदिन अधिकाई॥

> "He sees the world full of his own Lord:
> How can he have any quarrel with anybody? "*
> (Rāmacharitamānasa)

The heart of the devotee is ever so completely merged in Divine Love that it would not find pleasure in any other object even for a moment. The Gopīs, addressing Uddhava, said:-

> "O Uddhava, we do not possess ten or twenty hearts.
> The one we possessed nas been carried away by Śyāma (Śrī Kṛṣṇa), who is then to worship God? "#

The heart of the devotee no longer stays with him, how, then, will it take pleasure in other objects? That is why the God of these Love-intoxicated devotees is called "stealer of the heart."

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* निज प्रभुमय देखहिं जगत केहि सन करहिं बिरोध ॥

# ऊधौ, मन न भए दस बीस ।
एक हुतो सो गयो स्याम सँग, को आराधै ईस ॥

"This Śyāma (Kṛṣṇa) is a great robber:
His bewitching Form has stolen our hearts by a mere glance from the corner of his eyes."*
(Sūrdās)

He so dexterously steals the heart of the devotee and makes it His own possession, that no other object is able even to look at it. There is room for attraction or attachment of the mind only where something else is visible to us; but when there is hardly any scope for conceiving any other object, who will have attraction for whom? The Love-intoxicated Gopīs said:-

"Śyāma (the blue bodied Kṛṣṇa) is our body.
Śyāma is our mind, Śyāma is our wealth;
O Uddhava, all the twenty-four hours we are occupied with Śyāma,
Śyāma is in our heart, Śyāma is the breath of our life, without Śyāma we can have no satisfaction.
The Name of Śyāma is our only support like the blind man's staff;
Śyāma is our refuge, Śyāma is our thought,

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* मधुकर स्याम हमारे चोर।
मन हर लियो माधुरी मूरति, निरख नयनकी कोर॥

Śyāma the Lord of our life.
Our happiness lies in Śyāma, who is
the bestower of all happiness and the
storehouse of all beauty.
Uddhava, you are, indeed, mad that
you come running with the Gospel of
Yoga.
Where shall we keep your knowledge
of 'Yoga', when every pore of our
body is filled with Śyāma?"*

How can there be any incentive to possession of other objects when the doors of the heart are closed against the entrance of every other object but the dearest Śrī Kṛṣṇa? You strive for acquiring an object only when you perceive or hear of it, and develop a craving for it. You feel an urge for its acquisition only when the mind dwells on it with pleasure. In the case of the devotee, however, his heart has already become the monopoly of another, who has taken full possession of it and made it his permanent habitation. No room is left in it for holding any other object. Even if any object approaches for admittance, it has to return disappointed from a distance. For there is no help, no accommodation is available inside.

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* स्याम तन स्याम मन स्याम है हमारो धन,
आठों जाम ऊधौ हमें स्याम ही सों काम है।
स्याम हिये स्याम जिये स्याम बिनु नाहिं तिये,
आँधेकी-सी लाकरी अधार स्याम नाम है॥
स्याम गति स्याम मति स्याम ही है प्रानपति,
स्याम सुखदाईसों भलाई सोभाधाम है।
ऊधौ तुम भए बौरे पाती लैके आए दौरे,
जोग कहाँ राखैं यहाँ रोम-रोम स्याम है॥

> "Hari (God) permeates through every pore,
> not the least space is left unoccupied."*

Whom can the poor eyes see without the consent of the mind? When nothing else is visible, an urge for its possession is altogether out of the question.

Again, one feels an urge to possess an object from which he expects to derive some pleasure. When one has the fount of all joy by his side, how can there be any urge for the enjoyment of trivial pleasures? That is why lovers of God, who are embodiments of Love, are never observed to show any ardour in the pursuit of worldly activities, or worldly enjoyments.

The Lord Himself says:-

यो न हृष्यति न द्वेष्टि न शोचति न काङ्क्षति ।
शुभाशुभपरित्यागी भक्तिमान् यः स मे प्रियः ॥

(Śrimad Bhāgavadgīta XII. 17)

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* रोम रोम हरि रमि रहे, रही न तनिकौ ठौर ।

> "He Who never rejoices nor feels repugnance (for any thing), who neither grieves nor longs (for any thing), and who has renounced both good and evil, that devotee is dear to Me."

यज्ज्ञात्वा मत्तो भवति स्तब्धो भवति आत्मारामो भवति ॥ ६ ॥

6. REALIZING WHICH (DEVOTION IN THE FORM OF SUPREME LOVE) MAN BECOMES MAD, SILENT, AND DELIGHT IN SELF.

As soon as Divine Love manifests itself in a person, it makes him mad. The devotee gets thoroughly intoxicated with this Love and begins to spend his days and nights in singing the praises of his beloved Lord, in hearing His glory and in reflecting on His virtues. He remains oblivious of other external things. Just as a maniac talks and does whatever he likes, even so the Love-intoxicated devotee remains merged in the thoughts and talks of the Lord; for this is the one occupation to which his mind feels attracted. The Bhāgavata says:-

> "Hearing the blessed and universally known stories of the birth and sports of Lord Viṣṇu, the Wielder of the Discus, the devotee loses all sense of decorum and moves about in the world unattached chanting in a loud

> voice the Names of God indicative of such sports. His heart melts through Love as he habitually chants the Name of his beloved Lord in this way, and like one possessed, he now bursts into peals of laughter, now weeps, now cries now sings aloud and now begins to dance in a singular way."*

Thus behaving like a mad man and filled with ecstasy the devotee sometimes assumes complete silence and sits motionless like a statue. But this suspended animation indicates only the supreme gratification of his desire. The Lord has manifested Himself within his heart, and the devotee enraptured by the transcendent beauty of that Divine Form gets absorbed in meditation.

Goswāmī Tulasīdās, describing the condition of Sutīkṣṇa, says:-

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* शृण्वन् सुभद्राणि रथाङ्गपाणे-
र्जन्मानि कर्माणि च यानि लोके ।
गीतानि नामानि तदर्थकानि
गायन् विलज्जो विचरेदसङ्गः ॥
एवंव्रतः स्वप्रियनामकीर्त्या
जातानुरागो द्रुतचित्त उच्चैः ।
हसत्यथो रोदिति रौति गाय-
त्युन्मादवन्नृत्यति लोकबाह्यः ॥

(Śrīmad Bhāgavata XI. ii. 39-40)

> "The sage sat motionless on the Way. Through excess of joy his frame horripilated and assumed the appearance of a jack fruit (the skin of which is covered with bristles)."*

Such is the condition of the devotee when through ecstatic trance he becomes one with the Lord. His mind and body get absolutely stilled. The soul gets enraptured with joy. Such is the condition of the Ātmārāma, one who is delighted in the Self. In this state of self-rejoicing no trace of a thirst for wordly enjoyments is left within the heart:-

न हि स्वात्मारामं विषयमृगतृष्णा भ्रमयति ॥

(Śiva-Mahimna-Stotra)

He loses consciousness of everything else. This is the state of Identity or union reached through Love or Rasa (प्रेमाद्वैत or रसाद्वैत). Through Union with the Beloved, the Lover loses his separate existence.

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*मुनि मग माझ अचल होइ बैसा । पुलक सरीर पनस फल जैसा ॥

EXCLUSIVE CHARACTER OF DIVINE LOVE

सा न कामयमाना निरोधरूपत्वात् ॥ ७ ॥

7. LOVE HAS NO ELEMENT OF DESIRE IN IT, BEING OF THE NATURE OF NIRODHA (RENUNCIATION).

Renunciation is the very essence of this devotional Love. It cannot coexist with desire of any sort, not even the desire for liberation to say nothing of petty desires like those for possession of wealth, progeny, fame or enjoyment in heaven. That Devotion in which the devotee expects, seeks or asks for something in return is tainted by desire, it is a selfish transaction. The devotee in the path of Love seeks nothing else than the dearest object of his Love, viz., God and His service. In the Bhāgavata, Bhagavān Kapiladeva, an incarnation of God, says: "Devotees who follow the path of Love seek nothing else than My service. They do not accept, even when offered, the five forms of salvation, viz., Sālokya (residence in the abode of the Lord). Sārṣṭi (enjoyment of Divine powers), Sāmīpya (nearness to God), Sārūpya (similarity of form with the Lord) and Sāyujya (complete identity with the Lord.)"* With the rise of true Devotion, desires disappear as a matter of course. The reason for this is that renunciation is the very pith and marrow of Devotion. It is wholly exclusive or all-absorbing in character. Now let us examine what is meant by renunciation.

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* सालोक्यसार्ष्टिसामीप्यसारूप्यैकत्वमप्युत ।
दीयमानं न गृह्णन्ति विना मत्सेवनं जनाः ॥

निरोधस्तु लोकवेदव्यापारन्यासः ॥ ८ ॥

8. RENUNCIATION CONSISTS IN RELINQUISHING ALL FORMS OF ACTION, SECULAR AS WELL AS RELIGIOUS.

When devotional Love grows, renunciation of action (Karma) becomes automatic. The devotee intoxicated with Love knows nothing but his beloved Lord. His mind gets moulded into the Form of Śrī Kṛṣṇa and constantly remains in that state. He has ever before his eyes the beloved form of Śrī Kṛṣṇa and nothing else. His mind or heart never goes to any other object. The Gopīs addressing the Lord, said:-

> "O dearest Love, our hearts which were happily attached to our homes have been stolen away by you. Our hands which were engaged in domestic work have been paralysed, as it were, and our feet are loth to move a step aside from You. How

> shall we return home and returning home what shall we do?"*
>
> (Śrīmad Bhāgavata X.xxix.34)

Since the very picture of the world gets erased from the tablet of his mind, the devotee is no longer capable of any action enjoined by the Smṛtis or Vedas. It is, therefore, that all such activities leave him of their own accord. Describing the state of such a devotee, the saint - poet Sundardās says:-

> "A devotee in the path of Love loses all sense of decorum pertaining to the three worlds, nor does he follow the injunctions of the Vedas;
> He dreads not ghosts nor evil spirits, nor is he afraid of gods and demigods;
> He gives ear to none, sees nothing else, has no other craving.
> And speaks of nothing else; these are the marks of Devotion in the path of Love.
> Now he laughs and dances, and now begins to weep ;

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* चित्तं सुखेन भवतापहृतं गृहेषु
यन्निर्विशत्युत करावपि गृह्यकृत्ये ।
पादौ पदं न चलतस्तव पादमूलाद्
यामः कथं व्रजमथो करवाम किं वा ॥

Now his voice is choked; words do not
come out of the throat,
Now his heart surges with emotion and
he begins to sing at the top of his voice,
Now he sits mute and vacant as the
sky overhead.
His heart and all his belongings being
given over to Śrī Hari (God).
How can he retain his senses?
These are the marks of devotion in the
path of Love, listen O disciple, says
Sundara."*

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*

न लाज तीन लोककी, न वेदको कह्यौ करै।
न संक भूत-प्रेतकी, न देव-जच्छते डरै॥
सुनै न कान और की, द्रसै न और इच्छना।
कहै न बात और की, सुभक्ति प्रेमलच्छना॥
कबहुँक हँसि उठि नृत्य करै रोवन फिर लागै।
कबहुँक गदगद कंठ, सबद निकसैं नहिं आगे॥
कबहुँक हृदै उमंग बहुत ऊँचे सुर गावै।
कबहुँक ह्वै मुख मौन गगन जैसो रहि जावै॥
चित्त बित्त हरिसों लग्यो सावधान कैसे रहै।
यह प्रेमलच्छना भक्ति है, शिष्य सुनो, 'सुन्दर' कहै॥

तस्मिन्ननन्यता तद्विरोधिषूदासीनता च ॥ ९ ॥

9. EXCLUSIVENESS OF FEELING TOWARDS GOD AND INDIFFERENCE TO EVERYTHING HOSTILE TO GOD IS ALSO CALLED NIRODHA.

Even when he is conscious of the external world, the devotee maintains an attitude of exclusiveness towards his Beloved Lord and remains wholly indifferent towards activities that are repugnant to Him. Actions which are performed with such vigilance and care also come under the category of Nirodha (actionlessness). Every action performed by a devotee in the path of love is agreeable to his Beloved Lord and is exclusively dedicated to his service. Action which is repugnant to Him is as impossible in his case as it is impossible for the sun to disseminate darkness, or for nectar to cause death.

अन्याश्रयाणां त्यागोऽनन्यता ॥ १० ॥

10. EXCLUSIVENESS CONSISTS IN GIVING UP DEPENDENCE ON EVERYTHING ELSE (THAN ONE'S BELOVED LORD).

The mind of devotee in the path of Love does not even conceive the existence of any other object, how, then will it seek the shelter of any other person or thing? He looks upon the entire creation, both animate and inanimate, as the external body of his Beloved Lord, he sees nothing else besides him. Of a devoted wife Goswāmī Tulasīdās says in his Rāmacharitamānasa:

> "To the mind of a devoted wife of the foremost rank, no male other than her Lord exists even in dream."*

The great Mohammedan saint-poet 'Rahīm' (Abdur-Rahīm Khān-ī-Khānnā) says:-

> "The lovely form of the Beloved has settled in these eyes, there is no room left therein for any other beauty
> A traveller, says Rahīm, will himself go away disappointed when he finds the inn packed to the full."§

The famous Hindi poet Deva has beautifully portrayed in the following immortal lines the mind of the Gopīs, which was so steeped in the Love of Śrī Kṛṣṇa that the whole of this objective world appeared to them dyed in the colour of their Beloved Lord:-

> "A fathomless ocean of ink welled up all of a sudden.

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* उत्तम के अस बस मन माहीं ।
सपनेहुँ आन पुरुष जग नाहीं ॥

§ प्रीतम-छबि नैनन बसी, पर छबि कहाँ समाय ।
भरी सराय 'रहीम' लखि, आप पथिक फिरि जाय ॥

And submerged all the three worlds at a sweep,
Like words in black ink written on a piece of black paper;
Who is to discern and decipher them, especially when the mind has got deranged?
Darkness has enveloped the eyes like the dark night of new moon;
A drop of water of the Jambū river# has lost its identity in the waves of the Jamunā.
O friend, my mind has gone thoroughly out of control.
Having assumed the colour of Śyāma (Śrī Kṛṣṇa) of swarthy form, it has merged in the colour of Śyāma (and therefore cannot be distinguished from Him)."§

# A celestial river whose waters are said to be bluish colour.

§ औचक अगाध सिंधु स्याहीकौ उमड़ि आयो,
तामें तीनों लोक बूड़ि गये एक संगमें।
कारे-कारे आखर लिखे जु कारे कागद सु
न्यारे करि बाँचे कौन जाँचे चितभंगमें॥
आँखिनमें तिमिर अमावसकी रैन जिमि,
जंबूनद-बुंद जमुना-जल-तरंगमें।
यों ही मन मेरो मेरे कामकौ न रह्यो माई,
स्याम रँग ह्वै करि समानो स्याम रंगमें॥

If anyone comes and speaks to him about anyone else, he does not feel inclined to give ear to him, or such words do not enter his ears at all. If he is ever compelled to lend ear to such talk, the mind does not turn towards it. Before the marriage of Goddess Pārvatī, when the seven Ṛṣis pointing out the many defects of Lord Śiva persuaded Her to withdraw Her heart from the latter and offer it to Bhagavān Viṣṇu, who, they said, was the repository of all noble virtues, this very embodiment of the Love of Śiva (Pārvatī) gave the following memorable reply in the immortal words of Goswāmī Tulasīdās:-

> "It is my persistent vow for crores of births that I shall either wed Śiva, or remain a virgin,
> Granted that Mahādeva is the repository of all vices, and Viṣṇu the repository of all virtues;
> But one who has his heart fixed on anyone will be satisfied with him and him alone."*
> (Rāmacharitamānasa)

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* जन्म कोटि लगि रगर हमारी।
बरउँ संभु न त रहउँ कुआरी॥
महादेव अवगुन भवन बिष्नु सकल गुन धाम।
जेहि कर मनु रम जाहि सन तेहि तेही सन काम॥

The Gopīs also similarly said to Uddhava:-

"O Uddhava, the heart is guided by its
own choice.
Leaving sweet fruits like grapes and
dates, the insect bred in poison will
feed on poisonous plants.
The Chakora bird (the Greek Partridge)
will throw away camphor if the same is
offered to it, and, will be satisfied
with embers.
The bee which pierces through the
hardest wood will die rather than
pierce the soft petal of the lotus.
The moth hugs the flame, knowing it
to be its greatest friend
He alone says Sūradās, proves attractive
to one who has engrossed his mind!"*

Even so, the devotee in the path of Love knows no one else than his Beloved Lord whom he regards as his all-in-all. He makes Him his sole refuge and taking shelter under Him just as the fish takes to the water, does everything for his sake. Says Goswāmī Tulasīdās –

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* ऊधौ ! मन मानेकी बात ।
दाख छोहारा छाड़ि अमृतफल बिषकीरा बिष खात ॥
जो चकोरको दै कपूर कोउ तजि अंगार अघात ।
मधुप करत घर कोरे काठमें बँधत कमलके पात ॥
ज्यों पतंग हित जान आपनो, दीपकसों लपटात ।
'सूरदास' जाको मन जासों, ताको सोइ सुहात ॥

> "He is my only support, my only strength,
> my only hope, and the only object of my faith;
> The eyes of Tulasīdās are revetted on
> Rāma and Rāma alone just as the eyes
> of Chātaka bird are fixed on the cloud."*

Like the Chātaka, who is solely devoted to the cloud, he has his heart fixed on God alone: it is on Him that he wholly and solely depends; nay, it is for Him and Him alone that he lives. All his activities including his recreation and rest, his movements, his dealings with others and even his beneficent acts, are meant for Him. Exclusive Love for God being the sole motive of all these activities, they are naturally propitious to all.

लोके वेदेषु तदनुकूलाचरणं तद्विरोधिषूदासीनता ॥११॥

11. TO MAKE ONE'S ACTIVITIES, BOTH SECULAR AND RELIGIOUS, CONFORM TO THE WILL OF GOD IS WHAT IS MEANT BY INDIFFERENCE TO ALL THAT IS ANTAGONISTIC TO GOD.

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* एक भरोसो एक बल, एक आस बिसवास।
एक राम घनस्याम हित चातक 'तुलसीदास' ॥

In the case of him who does everything exclusively for God, activities that are repugnant to God naturally drop off. He can never engage in any action, whether enjoined by the Śrutis or Smṛtis, which is not agreeable to God, that is to say, which does not help in the growth of Divine Love.

The conventional rules of society as well as the injunctions of the Vedas make it obligatory on the son to obey his parents, on the wife to obey her husband and on the disciple to obey his preceptor; but if the orders of the latter are prejudicial to the growth of Divine Love, the Devotee in the path of Love refuses to carry them out, even if such refusal entails suffering on himself; for it is impossible for such a devotee to do anything which runs counter to the will of his beloved Lord.

Citing some honourable instances of such refusal, Goswāmī Tulasīdās says:-

"One who has no love for Rāma and Sītā,
Though dearest and nearest in relation,
should be renounced as the worst enemy.
Prahlāda renounced his father, Bibhīṣana

> his brother, Bharata his mother, Bali renounced his preceptor, and the Gopīs their husbands, and they are all remembered as benefactors of the world."*

Prahlāda defied the commands of his father, which were directly opposed to God; Bibhiṣana deserted his brother; Bharata paid no heed to the orders of his mother Kaikeyī; King Bali turned deaf ears to the remonstrances of his preceptor Śukrachārya; and the damsels of Vraja ignored the orders of their husbands. But they all contributed to the welfare of the world.

There are four types of Karma (Action); viz., (1) Nitya (of an obligatory nature), (2) Naimittika (incidental), (3) Kāmya (proceeding from desire) and (4) Niṣiddha (prohibited). Of these prohibited (Niṣiddha) action, such as theft, adultery, taking animal food and spirituous liquor should be abandoned by all. Actions which, though sanctioned by the Śāstras, are nevertheless performed with some desire, being conducive to bondage and involving an unending process of births and deaths, should also be eschewed according to the spirit of the Lord's own statement in the Gītā: '

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* जाके प्रिय न राम बैदेही।
तजिये ताहि कोटि बैरीसम जद्यपि परमसनेही॥
पिता तज्यो प्रहलाद, बिभीषन बंधु भरत महतारी।
बलि गुर तज्यो, कंत ब्रजबनितनि, भए जग मंगलकारी॥

' (Renunciation is declared by the wise to consist in relinquishing desire-born actions). As regards the two other forms of action, viz., Nitya (obligatory) and Naimittika (incidental), they should be performed in strict conformity with the procedure laid down in the Vedas and sanctioned by usage, without any attachment for the result and as behests of God and with a view to pleasing Him. That action alone which leads to the growth of Divine Love is conducive to His pleasure. To act in harmony with God through mind, speech and body, without attachment and without expectation of rewards, as taught by the Gītā, and to desist from all activity which is repugnant to Him - is what is meant by indifference to antagonistic actions. Till the stage of madness through Love is reached, actions which are agreeable to God are performed as a matter of course by the devotee in the path of Love.

भवतु निश्चयदार्ढ्यादूर्ध्वं शास्त्ररक्षणम् ॥१२॥

12. THE INJUNCTIONS OF THE SCRIPTURES SHOULD BE SCRUPULOUSLY RESPECTED, THAT IS TO SAY, ACTIONS WHICH ARE AGREEABLE TO GOD AND ARE ENJOINED BY THE SCRIPTURES SHOULD BE

DILIGENTLY PERFORMED EVEN AFTER ONE HAS MADE UP HIS MIND (TO ATTAIN THAT DIVINE LOVE WHICH IS BEYOND THE PROVINCE OF ETHICS).

In the state of madness through Love, which is beyond the pale of ordinary laws of morality, and in which there is no external consciousness, actions enjoined by the Vedas and sanctioned by the conventional rules of society automatically drop off, they are not deliberately given up.

Therefore, till that state of absolute forgetfulness of external existence is reached, duties enjoined by the scriptures should never be shirked in the name of Divine Love. That supreme state of Love is reached through the continual performance of actions of the obligatory and incidental types that are agreeable to God according to the injunctions of the scriptures and in a spirit of dedication to God and through the practice of Bhajana in the shape of hearing and chanting the Names and glories of God. The Lord Himself emphatically says in the Gītā:-

तस्माच्छास्त्रं प्रमाणं ते कार्याकार्यव्यवस्थितौ ।
ज्ञात्वा शास्त्रविधानोक्तं कर्म कर्तुमिहार्हसि ॥

(XVI. 24)

"For determining what you ought to do and what you ought not to do, the

> scriptures are your only authority. Knowing this truth, you ought to act in this world in conformity with the injunctions of the scriptures."

अन्यथा पातित्याशङ्कया ॥१३॥

13. OTHERWISE THERE IS RISK OF A FALL.

He who deliberately violates the rules of conduct laid down by the scriptures, and acts arbitrarily in defiance of the scriptures and seeks to exonerate himself on the plea of Divine Love, is bound to fall in the scale of spiritual evolution. The Lord Himself says:-

यः शास्त्रविधिमुत्सृज्य वर्तते कामकारतः ।
न स सिद्धिमवाप्नोति न सुखं न परां गतिम् ॥

(Gītā XVI. 23)

> "He who ignores the injunctions of the scriptures and follows the promptings of desire can neither attain perfection, nor happiness, nor the supreme state."

To shirk deliberately duties laid down by the scriptures is not the ideal of devotional Love. Such renunciation is a sign of delusion, and an arbitrary and licentious act and leads to demoniac wombs, suffering and hell.

लोकोऽपि तावदेव किन्तु भोजनादिव्यापारस्त्वा-
शरीरधारणावधि ॥ १४ ॥

14. WORLDLY DUTIES SHOULD ALSO BE SCRUPULOUSLY PERFORMED TILL THERE IS CONSCIOUSNESS OF THE EXTERNAL WORLD, BUT (BODILY) ACTIONS SUCH AS TAKING OF FOOD, ETC. WILL CONTINUE TO BE PERFORMED TILL THE BODY PERSISTS.

Side by side with religious duties, worldly duties such as attending to one's vocation in life and maintaining the family, etc., should also be carefully performed according to the injunctions of the scriptures and in conformity with the will of God. Surely there is a stage when all activity, religious as well as mundane, drops off as a matter of course; but till that state is actually reached both these forms of duty must be scrupulously performed. They will drop off automatically when the time comes. But actions which are purely of a bodily type, such as taking of food, etc., will continue to be performed even in that state; for they are necessary for the maintenance of the body. Although the devotee who is wholly merged in the ecstasy of Love neither desires, nor makes any attempt to feed Himself, he takes food automatically through sheer force of habit when it is placed before him. Of course, this act of feeding, too, is an offering to God.

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VARIOUS DEFINITIONS OF DIVINE LOVE WITH EXAMPLES

तल्लक्षणानि वाच्यन्ते नानामतभेदात् ॥ १५ ॥

15. NOW WE PROCEED TO STATE THE VARIOUS DEFINITIONS OF BHAKTI (LOVE) ACCORDING TO THE DIFFERENT SCHOOLS.

Different teachers have defined Bhakti in different ways. After stating their views first, Devarṣi Nārada will advance his own views in the matter.

पूजादिष्वनुराग इति पाराशर्यः ॥ १६ ॥

16. ACCORDING TO VEDAVYĀSA, SON OF PARĀŚARA, BHAKTI CONSISTS IN ATTACHMENT TO WORSHIP OF GOD AND OTHER ALLIED PRACTICES.

The devotee should treat his body, mind and possessions as objects meant only for the worship of God and should worship Him either in an Image or in the form of the external universe by means of all these objects with supreme reverence and in the prescribed manner. When the mind develops attachment for worship of God, it will automatically withdraw itself from objects of the world which entangle the mind. Worship should be both external and internal or mental. Through worship of God the devotee may attain the supreme abode of God:-

श्रीविष्णोरर्चनं ये तु प्रकुर्वन्ति नरा भुवि ।
ते यान्ति शाश्वतं विष्णोरानन्दं परमं पदम् ॥

(Viṣṇu-Rahasya)

> "People on this earth, who perform worship of God Viṣṇu, attain the supreme, eternal and blissful abode of God."

कथादिष्विति गर्गः ॥ १७ ॥

17. ACCORDING TO GARGA (ANOTHER GREAT APOSTLE OF BHAKTI), BHAKTI CONSISTS IN FONDNESS FOR HEARING THE STORIES OF THE VARIOUS SPORTS OF THE LORD.

Engaging the mind in chanting and hearing the Names of the Lord, His glories and virtues and the stories of His divine sports is undoubtedly a main feature of Bhakti. The majority of people in this world consists of those who have nothing to do with God or His glories. They spend their lives in talking of worldly things day and night. They never engage themselves in singing the praises of God, nor do talks about God appear agreeable to them. As Goswāmī Tulasīdās says, "their ears have no attraction for the stories of Śrī Rāma" ('श्रवन न रामकथा अनुरागी). Such being the case with the majority of people, those whose mind remains constantly engaged in hearing or singing the praises of the Lord should certainly be classed as devotees. The author of the present aphorisms, Devarṣi Nārada, himself addressing Vedavyāsa on another occasion said:-

> "The sages have come to the positive conclusion that singing the praises of the Lord of sacred fame is the undying fruit of all austerities, study of the Vedas, performance of sacrifices and charities, muttering of sacred formulas and pursuit of knowledge."*

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* इदं हि पुंसस्तपसः श्रुतस्य वा
स्विष्टस्य सूक्तस्य च बुद्धिदत्तयोः ।
अविच्युतोऽर्थः कविभिर्निरूपितो
यदुत्तमश्लोकगुणानुवर्णनम् ॥

(Śrīmad Bhāgavata I. v. 22)

In the Rāmacharitamānasa we read:-

"Chanting of the stories of Rāma drives
away the impurities of Kali just as
birds are scared away by the clapping
of hands;
For him who desires to cross the
ocean of worldly existence
The story of Rāma is like a stout barge."*

Therefore, true attachment to the stories of Śrī Hari is assuredly a mark of Devotion, and realization of God is bound to take place through this form of Devotion.

आत्मरत्यविरोधेनेति शाण्डिल्यः ॥ १८ ॥

18. ACCORDING TO ŚĀNDILYA, ANOTHER GREAT EXPONENT OF BHAKTI, THE LATTER CONSISTS IN SUPREME ATTACHMENT TO GOD, WHICH IS NOT OPPOSED TO LOVE OF SELF.

Devotion to Self means delighting in the purest state of Self without any break of interruption; it is this state of eternal rejoicing in Self which is called Devotion by those who worship God in His unmanifest aspect. Śrī Śankarāchārya says:-

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* राम कथा सुंदर करतारी। संसय बिहग उड़ावनिहारी॥
भवसागर चह पार जो पावा। रामकथा ता कहँ दृढ़ नावा॥

मोक्षकारणसामग्र्यां भक्तिरेव गरीयसी ।
स्वस्वरूपानुसन्धानं भक्तिरित्यभिधीयते ॥

> "Devotion to God is the greatest of the factors contributory to emancipation. And Devotion means quest for the Self."

It is God Himself who exists as the soul in every being; therefore, attachment to the Soul of the Universe is only another name for Devotion to God. And those who practise such Devotion will doubtless attain salvation.

नारदस्तु तदर्पिताखिलाचारिता तद्विस्मरणे
परमव्याकुलतेति ॥ १९ ॥

19. ACCORDING TO NĀRADA, HOWEVER, BHAKTI CONSISTS IN OFFERING ALL ACTIVITIES TO GOD AND FEELING SUPREMELY RESTLESS AND MISERABLE AT THE SLIGHTEST LAPSE IN REMEMBRANCE OF GOD.

Devarṣi Nārada has no quarrel with the definitions of Bhakti given by Vyāsa, Garga and Śāndilya. It is but meet and proper and necessary, too, to worship God, to sing praises of God and to love God as the soul of all. It was the Devarṣi himself who inspired Vyāsa to sing praises of God. Therefore, it is not with a view to supplanting or pointing out the defects of the other definitions, but to strengthen and supplement them, that Devarṣi Nārada gives the above definition of Bhakti, which covers them all, and is complete in every way, saying that Bhakti in its comprehensive application means consecrating all one's activities (both secular and religious) to God, practising ceaseless remembrance of God as the dearest object of one's heart, and feeling uneasy and distracted when there is the slightest lapse therein. Attachment to God's worship and His stories, and Love of God Himself as the Soul of the Universe, is included herein. Among all types of Yogīs (practicants), it is the type conforming to this definition that the Lord declares to be the best in the Gītā:-

योगिनामपि सर्वेषां मद्गतेनान्तरात्मना ।
श्रद्धावान् भजते यो मां स मे युक्ततमो मतः ॥

(VI. 47)

> "Of all types of Yogīs, he is considered by Me to be the best, who adoreth Me with reverence and with his inner self abiding in Me."

Again, the Lord says:-

तस्मात् सर्वेषु कालेषु मामनुस्मर युध्य च ।
मय्यर्पितमनोबुद्धिर्मामेवैष्यस्यसंशयम् ॥

(Gītā VIII. 7)

> "Therefore, O Arjuna, at all times (without interruption) think of Me alone and fight. Offering thy mind and reason to Me, without doubt thou shalt come to Me."

To be indifferent to honour and dishonour, gain and loss, victory and defeat, pleasure and pain, and other such dualities; to renounce all attachment and desire for fruit as well as the sense of 'I' and 'mine' in respect of the body and things relating to the body; to look upon God as the dearest object of one's heart, nay, as the highest refuge, the supreme goal and one's greatest friend and well-wisher; to remain absorbed in supreme Bliss while remembering with exclusive Devotion, deepest reverence and supreme Love the Name, Virtues, Glory and Being (स्वरूप) of God without break, like the continuous flow of oil and while absorbed in such thought to perform all acts through the body, speech and mind for the sake of that dearest Lord alone and just as it pleases Him, in a thoroughly disinterested spirit, our only motive being to win His pleasure and contribute to His happiness, which is the supreme interest of a human being; and lastly, if through any reason there is even a moment's break in His thought and remembrance, to feel infinitely more restless than the fish out of the water. This is the highest form of Bhakti.

A devotee in the path of Love, who has thus completely surrendered himself to God, will under no circumstance agree to give up remembrance of his dearest Lord even in exchange for salvation or non-return to this world, to say nothing of trifles like suzerainty over the three worlds. The Lord addresses the following words to Uddhava in praise of such devotees:-

> "O Uddhava, neither Brahmā, who is My own creation, nor Śankara, nor Balarāma, nor Lakṣmi, nor even my own self is so dear to Me as are devotees like you. To sanctify Myself with the dust of his feet, I constantly follow the footsteps of a devotee who has no worldly cravings who is tranquil at heart, who has no quarrel with any one, who beholds Me equally in all objects and who is constantly absorbed in My thoughts. The supreme bliss of desirelessness enjoyed by those exalted souls who have their heart attached to Me, who having surrendered their all to Me have made themselves utterly destitute, who are

> tranquil at heart and kindly disposed towards all creatures because of their relation to Me, and whose mind is completely free from all desires, is known to no one else."*

Bhakti as understood by Devarṣi Nārada is exactly of this type. A devotee of this type wil dedicate all his activities to God and, engaged in the ceaseless remembrance of God, will feel extremely restless and miserable when there is the least break in it.

अस्त्येवमेवम् ॥ २० ॥

20. IT IS EXACTLY AS DESCRIBED ABOVE.

In order to confirm the definition of Bhakti given above, the Devarṣi has put in this aphorism, which says Bhakti is exactly as described in the foregoing aphorism.

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* न तथा मे प्रियतम आत्मयोनिर्न शंङ्करः ।
न च सङ्कर्षणो न श्रीर्नैवात्मा च यथा भवान् ॥
निरपेक्षं मुनि शान्तं निर्वैरं समदर्शनम् ।
अनुव्रजाम्यहं नित्यं पूयेयेत्यङ्घ्रिरेणुभिः ॥
निष्किञ्चना मय्यनुरक्तचेतसः
शान्ता महान्तोऽखिलजीववत्सलाः ।
कामैरनालब्धधियो जुषन्ति यत्
तन्नैरपेक्ष्यं न विदुः सुखं मम ॥
(Śrīmad Bhāgavata XI. xiv. 15-17)

यथा व्रजगोपिकानाम् ॥ २१ ॥

21. THE DEVOTION OF THE GOPĪS OF VRAJA MAY BE TAKEN AS AN EXAMPLE OF THIS.

Having defined Bhakti, the Devarṣi now cites the example of the Gopīs of blessed memory, the crest-jewels among the loving devotees of God. Such is, in fact, the greatness of the Gopīs. No one on earth can adequately describe the Love of the Gopīs. Their mind body and possessions and their welfare in this world as well as the next stood dedicated to Śrī Kṛṣṇa. It was Śrī Kṛṣṇa who kept their mind engrossed day and night; it was Śri Kṛṣṇa, again, whose glories they constantly sang with their voices choked with emotion; and it was Śrī Kṛṣṇa whom they saw everywhere and at all times. Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa Himself spoke to them as follows:-

> "O Gopīs,, you have broken the hard iron chains of household ties and clung to Me with Love. This act of yours is altogether blameless. I cannot repay this debt of yours by serving you even for the lifetime of a

> celestial being. You will please discharge Me from this liability out of your own generosity."*

While despatching Uddhava with His message to the Gopīs, Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa paid the following tribute to the latter in a voice choked with emotion and with tears of Love trickling down His cheeks:-

> "O Uddhava, the Gopīs have offered their hearts to Me. I am their very life-breath; they have given up all the activities of their body for My sake, I have to look after those who have laid down their worldly obligations for My sake. The damsels of Gokul treat Me as dearer than the dearest object, and pining in separation from Me on account of my being away from them, they lose consciousness of the body when they send their thoughts to Me. Without me

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*

न पारयेऽहं निरवद्यसंयुजां
स्वसाधुकृत्यं विबुधायुषापि वः ।
या माभजन् दुर्जरगेहशृङ्खलाः
संवृश्च्य तद्वः प्रतियातु साधुना ॥

(Śrīmad Bhāgavata X. xxxii. 22)

> they are somehow sustaining themselves with great difficulty on the messages of My return to Vraja. They are one with Me and I am one with them."*

Uddhava went to Vraja and saw the condition of these Love-intoxicated Gopīs with his own eyes. He found that they saw Śrī Kṛṣṇa all around them, both inside and out. He heard from the lips of these Gopīs themselves:-

1

> "There is no room left in our hearts!
> How shall we accommodate anything else therein when the heart is fully occupied by the Darling of Nanda (Śrī Kṛṣṇa).
> While we are moving about or looking round, whether we are awake during the day or asleep at night,

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* ता मन्मनस्का मत्प्राणा मदर्थे त्यक्तदैहिकाः ।
ये त्यक्तलोकधर्माश्च मदर्थे तान् बिभर्म्यहम् ॥
मयि ताः प्रेयसां प्रेष्ठे दूरस्थे गोकुलस्त्रियः ।
स्मरन्त्योऽङ्ग विमुह्यन्ति विरहौत्कण्ठ्यविह्वलाः ॥
धारयन्त्यतिकृच्छ्रेण प्रायः प्राणान् कथञ्चन ।
प्रत्यागमनसन्देशैर्वल्लव्यो मे मदात्मिकाः ॥

(Śrīmad Bhāgavata X.xivi, 4-6)

That swarthy Form leaves not the
heart even for a single moment.
O Uddhava, you have made such fine
speeches and inculcated respect for
public opinion;
But what are we to do, when the body
is full to the brim with Love?
The jar cannot contain the ocean.
Blue in Form, possessing a lotus-like
face, enchanting gait and a sweet smile,
Says 'Sūra', for a sight of this Form
the eyes are dying athirst."*

2

"O Uddhava, we are not fit to practise
Yoga,
Being women, what do we know of the
essence of wisdom? How shall we
practise meditation?

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[*] नाहिन रह्यो हियमहँ ठौर।
नंदनंदन अछत कैसे आनिये उर और ॥
चलत चितवत दिवस जागत, सुपन सोवत रात।
हृदयते वह स्याम मूरति छिन न इत उत जात ॥
कहत कथा अनेक ऊधौ ! लोक-लाज दिखात।
कहा करौं तन प्रेमपूरन, घट न सिंधु समात ॥
स्याम गात सरोज आनन, ललित गति मृदुहास।
'सूर' ऐसे रूप कारन मरत लोचन प्यास ॥

You ask us to close these eyes - the eyes wherein stays the Form of Hari;
Such deceitful talk we are not going to hear.
O honey-tounged messenger!
You ask us to get our ears cleft and twist our looks into clotted hair; who will bear all this pain?
You advise us to give up the use of sandal paste and besmear our bodies with ashes, but don't you know we are burning with the fire of separation?
He, in whose quest the Yogīs have strayed and wander, still stays with us.
Says Sūrdās, He is never disunited from us, not even for a moment, just as the shadow never leaves the substance."*

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* ऊधौ ! जोग जोग हम नाहीं ।
अबला ग्यानसार कहा जानैं, कैसे ध्यान धराहीं ॥
ते ये मूँदन नैन कहत हौ, हरि मूरति जिन माहीं ।
ऐसी कथा कपटकी मधुकर हमते सुनी न जाहीं ॥
स्रवन चीर अरु जटा बँधावहु, ये दुख कौन समाहीं ।
चंदन तजि अँग भसम बतावत, विरह अनल अति दाहीं ॥
जोगी भरमत जेहि लगि भूले सो तो है हम पाहीं ॥
'सूरदास' सो न्यारो न पल छिन ज्यौं घटते परिछाहीं ॥

The Gopīs said, "O Uddhava, go and initiate into Yoga those who are disunited with the Lord. Here you see, there is eternal union. Our beloved Śyāma eternally stays with us." Uddhava was now disillusioned, he was carried away by the sweeping tide of the spotless Love of the Gopīs:-

> "Hearing the words of the Gopīs Uddhava forgot all canons of decorum;
> Singing the praises of Gopāla (the Divine Cowherd), he began to roam in the bowers elated with joy.
> Now he prostrates himself at the feet of the Gopīs, and acclaims their Devotion.
> And now he would run and embrace the trees in the intoxication of that Love."*

With a heart bent low with Devotion, he said:-

> "In this world it is these Gopīs alone who have attained the true end of their life, for they have their hearts wholly

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* सुनि गोपीके बैन नेम ऊधौके भूले ।
गावत गुन गोपाल फिरत कुंजनमें फूले ॥
खिन गोपिनके पग परै, धन्य सोइ है नेम ।
धाइ धाइ द्रुम भेंट हीं, ऊधौ छाके प्रेम ॥

devoted to Govinda, the Soul of the Universe, who is constantly being sought after by ascetics as well as mortals like us, obsessed by the fear or transmigration. In sooth, what need has he for the threefold birth of a Brāhman (viz., physical birth, investiture with the sacred thread and initiation into sacrificial rites), who has developed attraction for the stories of the Lord?

"The rarest boon (of Love) that fell to the lot of the damsels of Vraja, who during the Rāsa dance had the unique privilege of twining round their necks the arms of the Blessed Lord and thus had all their desires fulfilled, was neither obtained by Lakṣmi (the Goddess of wealth), who stays permanently on the bosom of the Lord, nor by the celestial damsels, who possess the grace and fragrance of a full-blown lotus, to say nothing of others. These blessed Gopīs renounced what is so difficult to renounce, viz., their own kith and kin and the path of noble women, and followed the footsteps of Mukunda (the Bestower of Salvation), who is constantly being sought after by the Srutis (Vedas). O what a rare privilege it would be if in my next birth I became either a creeper, herb

> or shrub in the woods of Brindāban, so that I might be blessed with the dust of feet of these Gopīs!"*

The ladies of Mathura thus depicted the condition of the Gopis, declaring their lives to be truly blessed:-

> "Blessed are the Gopīs, who have fixed their hearts on Śrī Kṛṣṇa, who while attending to their various household duties, such as milking the cows,

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* एताः परं तनुभृतो भुवि गोपवध्वो
गोविन्द एव निखिलात्मनि रूढभावाः ।
वाञ्छन्ति यद्भवभियो मुनयो वयं च
किं ब्रह्मजन्मभिरनन्तकथारसस्य ॥
नायं श्रियोऽङ्ग उ नितान्तरतेः प्रसादः
स्वर्योषितां नलिनगन्धरुचां कुतोऽन्याः ।
रासोत्सवेऽस्य भुजदण्डगृहीतकण्ठ-
लब्धाशिषां य उदगाद् व्रजवल्लवीनाम् ॥
आसामहो चरणरेणुजुषामहं स्यां
वृन्दावने किमपि गुल्मलतौषधीनाम् ।
या दुस्त्यजं स्वजनमार्यपथं च हित्वा
भेजुर्मुकुन्दपदवीं श्रुतिभिर्विमृग्याम् ॥

(Śrīmad Bhāgavata X. xlvii. 58, 60-61)

> threshing the paddy, churning the curds, brushing the courtyard and smeering it with cowdung, rooking crying babies in cradles and lulling them to sleep, or sprinkling and sweeping the floor, sing songs in praise of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, with a heart full of Love, with eyes wet with tears, and in a voice choking with emotion."*

The greatness of the Gopīs cannot be exaggerated. There have been devotees in the sacred land of Vraja, who renounced their all and longed to be transformed into particles of dust in the lotus-feet of the Gopīs. Truly has it been said:-

> "The Gopīs stand as the emblem of Love,
> They who won the hearts of Śrī Kṛṣṇa
> by clasping His arms to their bosom."§

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* या दोहनेऽवहनने मथनोपलेप-
प्रेङ्खेङ्खनार्भरुदितोक्षणमार्जनादौ ।
गायन्ति चैनमनुरक्तधियोऽश्रुकण्ठ्यो
धन्या व्रजस्त्रिय उरुक्रमचित्तयानाः ॥

(Śrīmad Bhāgavata X. xliv. 15)

§ गोपी प्रेमकी धुजा ।
जिन घनस्याम किये बस अपने उरधरि स्यामभुजा ॥

Great apostles of Divine Love like Mahāprabhu Śrī Chaitanyadeva, who held aloft the banner of renunciation, have recognized the Gopīs as their guides in the path of Love. The celebrated devotee Nāgarīdās (who was sometime the ruler of the Kishengarh State) says:-

"Praise be to goddesses like Lalitā,
who were so many sacred hymns of
the Vedas incarnated in Vraja as
milkmaids.

Beloved of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, they are always
anxious to be of help in the sports of
Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa. Intoxicated with the
Love of the Divine Pair (Rādhā and
Kṛṣṇa), embodiments of Bliss,
reservoirs of Beauty.
They cling to the Divine Pair like
their very shadows through all their
hours of joy.

They are like the rays of the moon-like
Śrī Rādhā.
They scatter honey in the shade of
sweet music, which sends a thrill of
joy in the heart of their Lord.

Says 'Nāgarī', they are entrusted with
the work of calling the Divine Lovers
to the place appointed for their meeting.

Intellect gets crippled in recounting
their virtues."*

Another devotee, who hailed from Vraja, says:-

"Merged in Divine Love, the Gopīs are
incomparable among women;
They are dear as life to Govinda,
whose eyes resemble the lotus.
The Gopīs are like crest-jewels among saints who are free from envy; The strong current of their spotless Love swept away all barriers in the shape of social conventions and rules of decorum. Those who sing praises of the bewitcher of hearts (Śrī Kṛṣṇa)

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* जयति ललितादि देवीय व्रज श्रुतिरिचा,
कृष्ण प्रिय केलि आभीर अंगी।
जुगल-रस-मत्त आनंदमय रूपनिधि,
सकल सुख समयकी छाँह संगी॥
गौरमुख हिमकरनकी जु किरनावली,
स्रवत मधु गान हिय पिय तरंगी।
'नागरी' सकल संकेत आकारिनी,
गनत गुनगननि मति होति पंगी॥

throwing off all barriers like this,
why should they not attain the supreme
bliss and joy of Divine Love? *"

The glory of the Gopīs can be appreciated to a certain extent only, when the practicant has made some progress in the path of Love, having developed supreme dispassion towards all objects of enjoyment of the world.

तत्रापि न माहात्म्यज्ञानविस्मृत्यपवादः ॥२२॥

22. EVEN IN THAT STATE (OF COMPLETE SELF-FORGETFULNESS) THERE IS NO ABSENCE (IN THE GOPĪS) OF THE SENSE OF THE DIVINE GLORY (OF ŚRĪ KRISHṆA).

It means the Gopīs were fully aware of Śrī Kṛṣṇa's glory, secret and virtues. Some people are of opinion that in the realm of love the sense of glory is absent. For they believe

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* ये हरिरस ओपी गोपी सब तियतें न्यारी ।
कमलनयन गोविंदचंदकी प्रानपियारी ॥
निरमत्सर जे संत तिनहिं चूड़ामनि गोपी ।
निरमल प्रेम प्रबाह सकल मरजादा लोपी ॥
जे ऐसे मरजाद मेटि मोहन गुन गावें ।
क्यों नहिं परमानन्द प्रेमभगती सुख पावें ॥

that Love cannot subsist where there is a sense of glory. But such was not the case with the Gopīs. Knowing Śrī Kṛṣṇa to be God Himself, the Supreme Puruṣa, the Gopīs regarded Him as the Beloved of their heart. Herein lies the main difference between Divine Love and earthly love. This is really what happens in Divine Love. Those who deny knowledge of the divinity of Śrī Kṛṣṇa in the Gopīs are requested to read and ponder over the following extracts from Śrimad Bhāgavata:-

> "O Almighty Lord, it is not becoming of Thee to address such harsh words to us, who have renounced everything else and clung to the soles of Your sacred feet. Therefore, O uncontrollable Lord! Pray accept us in the same way as the Primal Being. Śrī Nārāyaṇa, takes all seekers of salvation under His protection, and do not repudiate us. O Hari, You know the secret of virtue. (It is not the greatest of virtues to take shelter under Your feet; being a knower of the secret of virtue, how dare You ask us return? Can anyone who has taken refuge under Your blessed feet return therefrom?) You told us just now that the prime duty of a woman was to serve her husband, children and other relations; let this homily remain with You, who are God Himself, the source

of this moral instruction, and the fountain of all virtues; for You are the dearest friend and soul of all embodied creatures (including our husbands and children). O lotus-eyed Kṛṣṇa! It has become impossible for us to stay anywhere else ever since we obtained the privilege of touching the soles of your sacred feet, which even Śrī Lakṣmi (Goddess of wealth) seldom enjoys the privilege of touching (in Your manifestation as Viṣṇu), and since You, who are so dear to the ascetics of the forest_gladdened our hearts. Even Lakṣmī, whose favourable looks are diligently sought after by other gods, having secured a permanent and undisputed place on Your bosom seeks with Tulasī the dust of Your feet, which other devotees are privileged to bear on their heads; we have without doubt taken refuge to that very dust of Your sacred feet. You are the Primal Puruṣa, of Paramātmā, the protector of the Devas, who has come down on earth in a manifest form to remove the fear and suffering of Vraja.

"You are surely not the mere delight or (child) of Yasodā; You are the Witness of (all that is going on in) the heart of all embodied beings. O friend, at the invocation of Brahmā, You have taken descent in the clan of Yadus for the protection of the entire universe."*

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* मैवं विभोऽर्हति भवान् गदितुं नृशंसं
संत्यज्य सर्वविषयांस्तव पादमूलम् ।
भक्ता भजस्व दुरवग्रह मा त्यजास्मान्
देवो यथाऽऽदिपुरुषो भजते मुमुक्षून् ॥
यत्पत्यपत्यसुहृदामनुवृत्तिरङ्ग
स्त्रीणां स्वधर्म इति धर्मविदा त्वयोक्तम् ।
अस्त्वेवमेतदुपदेशपदे त्वयीशे
प्रेष्ठो भवांस्तनुभृतां किल बन्धुरात्मा ॥
यर्ह्यम्बुजाक्ष तव पादतलं रमाया
दत्तक्षणं क्वचिदरण्यजनप्रियस्य ।
अस्प्राक्ष्म तत्प्रभृति नान्यसमक्षमङ्ग
स्थातुं त्वयाभिरमिता बत पारयामः ॥
श्रीर्यत्पदाम्बुजरजश्चकमे तुलस्या
लब्ध्वापि वक्षसि पदं किल भृत्यजुष्टम् ।
यस्याः स्ववीक्षणकृतेऽन्यसुरप्रयास-
स्तद्वद् वयं च तव पादरजः प्रपन्नाः ॥
(X. xxix. 31, 32, 36-37)

व्यक्तं भवान् व्रजभयार्तिहरोऽभिजातो
देवो यथाऽऽदिपुरुषः सुरलोकगोप्ता ॥
(X. xxix. 41)

On the authority of these and other similar texts, and on other grounds, it is proved that the gopīs surrendered themselves to Śrī Kṛṣṇa, knowing Him to be God Himself, the embodiment of Truth, Consciousness and Bliss.

तद्विहीनं जाराणामिव ॥ २३ ॥

23. (LOVE THAT IS) BEREFT OF THIS KNOWLEDGE (KNOWLEDGE OF DIVINE GLORY) IS OF THE SAME CATEGORY AS THE LOVE OF A PARAMOUR.

Without a sense of Divine Glory, love of a woman directed towards a man becomes as disreputable as the love of a paramour. The Love, which is accompanied by complete self-surrender, which is not tainted by a tinge of earthly interest, can be conceived only in relation to God. Love in relation to God, even though unaccompanied by knowledge of His divinity, never goes in vain. But love, which is based on the knowledge that the object of Love is God Himself, has some special virtues

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न खलु गोपिकानन्दनो भवा-
नखिलदेहिनामन्तरात्मदृक् ।
विखनसार्थितो विश्वगुप्तये
सख उदेयिवान् सात्वतां कुले ॥

(X. xxxi 4)

of its own. What infinite joy we derive from the mere thought that God is our beloved Lord! Then, how great and indescribable should be the joy of those who have actually realized God as the supreme object of their Love! The Gopīs had the proud privilege of enjoying this stainless Divine Bliss. It was therefore that the great sage Śukadeva, who was himself a liberated soul, related this sacred story of Divine Love to Emperor Parīkṣit, who was awaiting his death on the bank of the Ganges. This also goes to prove that the Love of the Gopīs was saturated with the knowledge of Divine Glory and was purest in character.

नास्त्येव तस्मिंस्तत्सुखसुखित्वम् ॥ २४ ॥

24. IN THAT LOVE (THE LOVE OF A PARAMOUR) THERE IS NO DERIVING OF JOY FROM THE JOY OF THE BELOVED.

A lustful lover loves his paramour only for his own pleasure, for the gratification of his own senses; he does not derive joy from the joy of his beloved. The Love of the Gopīs was not of this type. In earthly love, which is born of lust, the beloved is the paramour, and the desire for physical contact is present therein. In the case of the Gopīs, however, the Beloved was God Himself, the Soul of the Universe, and there was no desire for physical contact lurking anywhere in their hearts. The Gopīs merely sought the pleasure of Śrī Kṛṣṇa.

Whatever they possessed - their body, mind, intellect, physical charm, youth, wealth and life itself - stood offered to Śrī Kṛṣṇa for His worship. They sought to make Śrī Kṛṣṇa happy by offering their all to Him. They considered it their sacred duty to do whatever they thought would bring delight to Śrī Kṛṣṇa. They derived supreme joy from this act of service. They had no idea of any other form of enjoyment, much less would they seek such enjoyment. Herein lies the difference between Love and sensuality. Sensuality seeks gratification through others, whereas Love seeks to make the Beloved happy, and to derive joy from the joy of the latter. While describing the Love of the Gopīs author of the Chaitanya-Charitāmṛta correctly says:-

> "The desire for gratification of one's own senses is called Kāma (sensuality), whereas the desire for gratifying the senses of Śrī Kṛṣṇa is known by the name of Prema (Love). The object of Kāma is self-gratification, while Prema has the happiness of Kṛṣṇa for its object. The Gopī cares not for her own happiness or otherwise: the happiness of Kṛṣṇa is the motive of all her activities, worldly duties and religious obligations, and functions of the body and other activities, sense of decorum, patience, comfort of body and essence of the bliss of self,

renouncing all these, she takes to the worship of Kṛṣṇa. It is for the happiness of Kṛṣṇa (and not for her own happiness) that she pursues the path of Love. This is what they call strong attachment for Kṛṣṇa. It is as stainless as a clean-washed piece of cloth. Thus, there is a world of difference between Kāma and Prema. Kāma is pitch darkness, Prema is the brilliance of the sun in a cloudless sky. There is no trace of sensuality in the Gopīs. The happiness of Kṛṣṇa is the only motive of their contact with him."*

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* आत्मेन्द्रिय प्रीति-इच्छा, तार नाम काम।
कृष्णेन्द्रिय प्रीति-इच्छा धरे प्रेम नाम॥
कामेर तात्र्यप निज संभोग केवल।
कृष्ण-सुख तात्पर्य प्रेम तो प्रबल॥
आत्म-सुख-दुःख गोपी ना करे विचार।
कृष्ण-सुख-हेतु करे सब व्यवहार॥
लोकधर्म, वेदधर्म, देहधर्म कर्म।
लज्जा, धैर्य देहसुख, आत्मसुख मर्म॥
सर्व त्याग करये करे कृष्णेर भजन।
कृष्णसुख हेतु करे प्रेमेर सेवन॥
इहाके कहिये कृष्णे दृढ अनुराग।
स्वच्छ धौत वस्त्र जैछे नाहि कोन दाग॥

Surrender of all their possession to Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the feeling of supreme restlessness in forgetting Śrī Kṛṣṇa even for a moment, right knowledge about Śrī Kṛṣṇa's greatness and glory and rejoicing in the happiness of Śrī Kṛṣṇa - these are the four dominating features in the Love of the Gopīs for Śrī Kṛṣṇa.

This Love of the Gopīs is extremely pure and transcendent. May Śrī Kṛṣṇa take pity on those who scent sin or adultery therein.

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अतएव काम प्रेमे बहुत अंतर ।
काम अंधतम प्रेम निर्मल भास्कर ॥
अतएव गोपीगणे नाहि कामगंध ।
कृष्णसुख हेतु मात्र कृष्णेर संवंध ॥

सा तु कर्मज्ञानयोगेभ्योऽप्यधिकतरा ॥२५॥

25. THIS (DIVINE LOVE) IS SUPERIOR EVEN TO KARMA (ACTION), JÑĀNA (KNOWLEDGE) AND YOGA.

Karma, Jñāna and Yoga - all these three are equally conducive to God-Realization; but Bhakti (Devotion) is superior to them all. In the former, the caste, order and spiritual capacity of the practicant have to be considered, and they are also attended with the risk of a fall, whereas in true Devotion there is no such risk, as the practicant receives the fullest support and help from God. Moreover, the path of Devotion is open to all alike, irrespective of caste, creed, or sex. Goswāmī Tulasīdās says:-

> "Those who shun the path of Devotion, though knowing it to be such, and take great pains over the attainment of Wisdom alone, are as stupid as the man who leaving the proverbial cow, which yields whatever we seek there - from, wander in quest of the sun-plant (Āk) for the sake of milk. Those who, leaving the path of Devotion to Śrī Hari, seek to derive happiness through other means, O chief of birds, are as thick-headed as the fool who seeks to swim across the ocean without the help of a barge. O Umā,

the practice of Yoga, Japa (muttering of sacred formulas), charity and austerities, and various kinds of sacrifices and other rites and observances evoke not the Divine as surely and fully as does unalloyed Love.

O Garuḍa, there is no better form of Bhajana (worship) than cultivation of Love.

Realizing this, the sages engage themselves in repeatedly chanting the glories of God."*

(Rāmacharitamānasa)

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* जे असि भगति जानि परिहरहीं । केवल ग्यान हेतु श्रम करहीं ॥
ते जड़ कामधेनु गृहँ त्यागी । खोजत आकु फिरहिं पय लागी ॥
सुनु खगेस हरि भगति बिहाई । जे सुख चाहहिं आन उपाई ॥
ते सठ महासिंधु बिनु तरनी । पैरि पार चाहहिं जड़ करनी ॥

उमा जोग जप दान तप नाना ब्रत मख नेम ।
राम कृपा नहिं करहिं तस जस निस्केवल प्रेम ॥

पन्नगारि सुनु प्रेम सम भजन न दूसर आन ।
यह बिचारि मुनि पुनि-पुनि करत राम-गुन-गान ॥

The Lord Himself says:-

> "Yogic practices wisdom, righteousness, austerities, renunciation and the study of scriptures do not captivate Me as easily and completely as does unflinching Devotion to Me. I, the beloved Self of saints and holy men, may be conquered only through reverence and Devotion. Devotion to Me purifies the heart of even low-born persons such as a Chānḍāla (pariah)."*

Again, the Lord says in the *Gīta*:-

> "I cannot be perceived, O Arjuna, in the Form in which you have seen Me, through the study of the Vedas, or through the practice of austerities, charity and sacrifices. O subduer of

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* न साधयति मां योगो न सांख्यं धर्म उद्धव।
न स्वाध्यायस्तपस्त्यागो यथा भक्तिर्ममोर्जिता॥
भक्त्याहमेकया ग्राह्यः श्रद्धयाऽऽत्मा प्रियः सताम्।
भक्तिः पुनाति मन्निष्ठा श्वपाकानपि सम्भवात्॥

> foes, I can be perceived in this way, known in essence and entered into only through exclusive Love."(XI.53.54)§

फलरूपत्वात् ॥२६॥

26. FOR THIS (DIVINE LOVE) IS AN END IN ITSELF.

The type of Love described above is an end in itself, it is not a means to an end. The Devotion, which is recognized as means to the attainment of Wisdom, is an auxiliary form of Devotion. It falls under the category of ordinary worship, it is not the highest manifestation of Devotion characterized as Love. This Love is the end or culmination of all disciplines.

> "Undertaking pilgrimages, and undergoing disciplines such as the practice of Yoga and cultivation of dispassion and wisdom; Varieties of Karma (religious rites), practices and observances, self-control, vows of various kinds, compassion

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§ नाहं वेदैर्न तपसा न दानेन न चेज्यया ।
शक्य एवंविधो द्रष्टुं दृष्टवानसि मां यथा ॥
भक्त्या त्वनन्यया शक्य अहमेवंविधोऽर्जुन ।
ज्ञातुं द्रष्टुं च तत्त्वेन प्रवेष्टुं च परंतप ॥

towards all beings, service of one's
Preceptor and the Brāhmans as a
class, cultivation of learning with
humility and height of wisdom;
These and other disciplines described
at length in the Vedas
Devotion to Śrī Hari is the end of them
all."*

ईश्वरस्याप्यभिमानद्वेषित्वाद् दैन्यप्रियत्वाच्च ॥२७॥

27. GOD, TOO, HAS AN AVERSION FOR PRIDE AND LOVES HUMILITY.

Practicants treading the paths of Karma, Jñāna and Yoga are liable to get proud of their own power and the tenacity of their discipline; while God bears, among others, the designation of ' दर्पहारी ' (humbler of pride). In fact, God has no hatred or partiality for anyone, all are equal in His eyes; He delivers all. Of course, the methods of deliverance are different in different cases. He delivers the haughty and proud through chastisement, and the meek and humble devotees through hearty and affectionate caresses. That is why even the wrath of God has been declared as a blessing. He assumes the role of an enemy in respect of the proud and haughty, and that of a loving friend in relation to the meek and the humble. That is why He is called by such names as 'Friend of the humble,' 'Shelter of the shelterless,' 'Wealth of the poor,' and so on. In reality, however, His heart is full of Love even for the proud, it is therefore that He humbles the pride of the latter. Says Goswāmī Tulasīdās:-

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* तीर्थाटन साधन समुदाई । जोग बिराग ग्यान निपुनाई ॥
नाना कर्म धर्म ब्रत दाना । संजम दम जप तप मख नाना ॥
भूत दया द्विज गुर सेवकाई । बिद्या बिनय बिबेक बड़ाई ॥
जहँ लगि साधन बेद बखानी । सब कर फल हरि भगति भवानी ॥

> "It is a part of Śrī Rāma's nature that He does not allow pride to grow in His devotees,
> Pride which is the cause of worldly bondage and brings suffering of various kinds,
> And which is the root of all sorrow.
> It is therefore that the All-merciful Lord (Śrī Rāma) removes it:
> For He has deep affection for His devotees."*
>
> (Rāmacharitamānasa)

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* सुनहु राम कर सहज सुभाऊ । जन अभिमान न राखहिं काऊ ॥
संसृति मूल सूलप्रद नाना । सकल सोक दायक अभिमाना ॥
ताते करहिं कृपानिधि दूरी । सेवक पर ममता अति भूरी ॥

Notwithstanding all this, the fact cannot be denied that there is show of hatred in all punishment; but the meek and humble He claps to His bosom. He feels no hesitation in performing the meanest service for the meek devotee; whereas the devotee on his part naturally deems himself to be the humble servant of God. He prays to the Lord thus:-

> "O Lord, Thou art the sole refuge of this humble soul, who knows no Sādhanā (discipline), and who is completely under the thumb of Māyā (illusion), and loaded with sins."*

> "Where shall I go leaving Thy sacred feet?
> Who else is known in the world as the redeemer of the fallen?
> Who is excessively fond of the meek and the humble?"§

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* सर्वसाधनहीनस्य पराधीनस्य सर्वथा ।
पापपीनस्य दीनस्य कृष्ण एव गतिर्मम ॥

§ जाउँ कहाँ तजि चरन तुम्हारे ।
काको नाम पतितपावन जग, केहि अति दीन पियारे ॥

This humility is different from that state of privation in which a man suffering from want of money, honour and worldly glory, etc., plants for obtaining them. It denotes that absence of pride and egoism which even the greatest and mightiest of emperors may possess through the grace of God. This humility consists in the total annihilation of pride and the feeling of doership - in the recognition of the fact that there is no such thing as 'I' and 'Mine'; all that exists is God; everything belongs to God; all that happens, happens through His power and inspiration: He alone is the doer and the dictator both.

But true humility as described above, which is so dear to God, is not easy of attainment. True humility does not appear so long as one is not completely exercized of the devil of pride. Pride of birth, nationality, wealth, honour, learning, spiritual discipline, health etc., and the sense of doership do not allow humility to appear; out of hypocrisy one may make an external show of humility, he may call himself humble before God; he may assume the role of weeping; but his humility will be tested only when he can maintain it in a natural form even on the acquisition of the greatest of worldly possessions and means of spiritual advancement. He who not only tolerates being publicly denounced as a sinner and a wretch by others lower in rank than himself; but takes such condemnation to be deserved and feels delighted to hear it and who is always pining for a vision of God - it is such humble and contrite souls that are loved by God. In true Devotion there is no room for the pride of one's own efforts or spiritual discipline, that is how the path of devotion is superior to all other paths.

तस्या ज्ञानमेव साधनमित्येके ॥ २८ ॥

28. SOME (THINKERS) ARE OF THE OPINION THAT JÑĀNA (KNOWLEDGE) IS THE ONLY MEANS TO ATTAIN THAT (LOVE OR DEVOTION).

It is no doubt true that Bhakti must be preceded by the Knowledge that the object of one's Devotion and worship is the Lord and master of all, the support and substratum of all, the supreme God who creates, sustains and destroys the Universe, the Lord of Māyā, unborn, imperishable, omnipotent, imniscient, the soul of the Universe, absolute, changeless, formless, possessed of attributes and possessed of a Divine Form, and that there is none superior to Him. Without this much of knowledge there will be no faith in God, without faith there will be no attachment; and without attachment Bhakti will not be established on a firm footing. Says

Goswāmī Tulasīdās:-

> "Without knowledge, there can be no faith,
> without faith, there will be no attachment,
> without attachment, Bhakti cannot endure;
> Even so, O chief of birds, the smoothness produced by water does not stand."*
> (Rāmacharitamānasa)

But herein it is not necessary to pursue a course of discipline leading to a knowledge of the identity of the Universal Spirit with the individual soul. Devotion to God may be developed through mere faith and reverence. Jaṭāyu, the chief of vultures, the Lord of elephants, prince Dhruva Śabarī, the Bhīla lady, and other Purāṇic characters realized God through mere Devotion of the type described above.

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* जानें बिनु न होइ परतीती।
बिनु परतीति होइ नहिं प्रीती॥
प्रीति बिना नहिं भगति दिढ़ाई।
जिमि खगपति जल कै चिकनाई॥

अन्योन्याश्रयत्वमित्यन्ये ॥ २९ ॥

29. ACCORDING TO OTHERS, BHAKTI (DEVOTION) AND JÑĀNA (KNOWLEDGE) ARE INTER-DEPENDENT.

This is also true in certain cases. Through practice of the secondary (गौणी) type of Devotion, the Truth about God is realized, and through a realization of this Truth one is able to develop excessive fondness for the Lord. But lovers of Bhakti alone do not care for this view. For they know that when Devotion of the nature of Love appears in its fully developed form, nothing remains within his Knowledge as a separate entity. The love and the Beloved become one. Who, then, will know about whom?

स्वयं फलरूपतेति ब्रह्मकुमाराः* ॥ ३० ॥

30. ACCORDING TO THE SONS OF BRAHMĀ (SANATKUMĀRA AND HIS BROTHERS, AND NĀRADA), BHAKTI IS AN END IN ITSELF.

Therefore, Bhakti is both a means and and end. It is both the root and fruit of the tree of spirituality. True devotees practise Devotion for its own sake. For it is an end in itself. It cannot be attained through particular

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* Some read it as ब्रह्मकुमारः

Sādhanā (course of discipline), nor is there anything superior to it for the realization of which it may be used as a means. Says Goswāmī Tulasīdās:-

> "Bhakti is self-sufficient and is dependent on no other Sādhanā.
> Knowledge and wisdom are subordinate to it."*
> (Rāmacharitamānasa)

राजगृहभोजनादिषु तथैव दृष्टत्वात् ॥ ३१ ॥

31. THIS IS CORROBORATED BY THE EXAMPLES OF THE ROYAL PALACE AND MEALS, ETC.

These examples have been taken to show how Devotion is an end in itself.

न तेन राजपरितोषः क्षुधाशान्तिर्वा ॥ ३२ ॥

32. IT (THE MERE KNOWLEDGE OF THE INS AND OUTS OF A PALACE) DOES NOT HELP US TO WIN THE FAVOUR OF THE KING (WHO OCCUPIES IT), NOR DOES IT (THE MERE KNOWLEDGE OF A PARTICULAR KIND OF FOOD) HELP US TO SATISFY OUR HUNGER.

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* सो स्वतंत्र अवलंब न आना ।
तेहि आधीन ग्यान बिग्याना ॥

The knowledge of a palace derived from mere hearsay will not do. Suppose we have also come to know that the king is a God-fearing man, a powerful potentate and a great well-wisher of his subjects, and that he possesses a handsome appearance and a number of virtues and excellencies of character. But what of that? We shall not be able to please the king with the mere knowledge of these facts. We may likewise come to know that a particular food preparation possesses a sweet and delicious flavour, and we may also come to know the ingredients of which it is made; but all this knowledge will not satisfy our hunger. Even so mere verbal knowledge of God will not secure His pleasure; nor will it bring peace to our soul. Although it is true that all are equal in the eyes of God, His pleasure can be secured only through Devotion. He Himself says in the Gītā:-

समोऽहं सर्वभूतेषु न मे द्वेष्योऽस्ति न प्रियः।
ये भजन्ति तु मां भक्त्या मयि ते तेषु चाप्यहम् ॥

> "I am equally present in all creatures; there is none hateful or dear to Me. Nevertheless they who worship Me through Devotion abide in Me, and I abide in them."

तस्मात्सैव ग्राह्या मुमुक्षुभिः ॥ ३३ ॥

33. THEREFORE, THEY WHO SEEK LIBERATION (FROM WORLDLY BONDAGE) MUST ADOPT THE PATH OF DEVOTION.

Devotion not only cuts asunder the bonds of our worldly existence without any difficulty, it attracts God himself, who becomes the object of our Love and carries on His Divine sports with us.

Says Goswāmī Tulasīdās:-

> "The supreme state of final emancipation or absolution is very difficult to attain; Such is the verdict of saints, the Purāṇas, the Vedas and the Śāstras alike. That very salvation thrusts itself unsolicited upon the devotee of Rāma."*
>
> (Rāmacharitamānasa)

This supremely rare boon of salvation, which is not easy to attain even through the pursuit of the severest of disciplines, forces itself on the devotee unsolicited, but the devotee 'gives it a cold shoulder, being covetous of Devotion.'§

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* अति दुर्लभ कैवल्य परम पद ।
संत पुरान निगम आगम बद ॥
राम भजत सोइ मुकुति गोसाईं ।
अनइच्छित आवइ बरिआईं ॥
मुक्ति निरादर भगति लुभाने ॥

He does not even care to look at it. There is no reason why one should take to any other discipline, leaving this supreme state of Bhakti which is at the same time so easy to attain. Those who possess reverence and wisdom should, therefore, practise Devotion and Devotion alone.

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PRACTICE OF DIVINE LOVE — GLORY OF SATSANGA

तस्याः साधनानि गायन्त्याचार्याः ॥ ३४ ॥

34. THE ĀCHĀRYAS (TEACHERS AND PROPHETS) HAVE DESCRIBED THE METHODS OF PRACTICE OF DEVOTIONAL LOVE.

Having established the superiority of Bhakti (Devotion) over Karma (Action) and Jńāna (Knowledge), Devarṣi Nārada now proceeds to describe the different methods of practice of Devotion as sung and shown by saints and prophets, who are Masters of the path and have initiated the path of Devotion.

तत्तु विषय त्यागात् सङ्ग त्यागाच्च ॥ ३५ ॥

35. THAT (PRACTICE OF DEVOTION) IS REALIZED THROUGH RENUNCIATION OF WORLDLY OBJECTS AND WORLDLY ATTACHMENT.

The stream of Love flows naturally through every heart, because the Jīva is eternally a part of the totality of consciousness, or God, the embodiment of Supreme Bliss and Supreme Love. But that Love being directed to worldly objects, the flow has become vitiated. That is why Love has been transformed into lust, which produces only sorrow. That is why (ordinarily) there is no manifestation of the Divine or Godward aspect of Love. In order to bring out this aspect of Love, it is necessary to turn its direction from the world towards God. There are two methods of doing this - (1) renunciation of worldly objects as such; and (2) renunciation of attachment for worldly objects. Those who hold that Devotion may be gained even while they are attached to worldly objects, or even while they are engaged more and more in the accumulation and enjoyment of worldly objects, are labouring under a delusion. When the spirit of Devotion is developed, there remains nothing in the world for enjoyment. When none remains as the enjoyer, how can there be existence of objects of enjoyment? When God becomes the sole enjoyer, and the devotee with the whole of his body, senses and possessions becomes the object of enjoyment of God. God is, then realized as the sole Puruṣa (Male), and all the rest Prakṛti (Female), of whom He is the enjoyer. At this stage (of realization), the devotee cannot maintain for himself any object of enjoyment. If anyone desires to escape from this position by saying that it indicates a very high state of spiritual existence, he will nevertheless have to practise to the best of his capacity, progressive renunciation of objects of enjoyment as well as attachment for such objects. When the body is absorbed in enjoyment, or the mind is attached to worldly objects, how will one practise, with that very body and mind, service to beloved God? That is why renunciation of worldly objects is a sin qua non of Devotion. What to speak of physical enjoyment, even the very thought of such enjoyment has to be given up: for it is a psychological law that the attachment of the mind will grow for an object it meditates upon. The Lord says in the Bhāgavata:-

> "Through meditation on worldly objects, the mind gets attached to worldly objects; but through repeated remembrance of Me, the mind gets dissolved in Me."*

Wherever you fix the mind, it will get attached there. This fixing has to be done through the senses. The kind of sight we repeatedly see, the words we hear, the food we take, the object we smell and touch - the mind will revolve round them; and the more it revolves upon an object, the more it develops attachment for it. If we attend the theatre and hear music from harlots, the mind will get attracted to this; similarly, if we attend a performance representing the lives and activities of devotees, and hear Kīrtana, the mind will be attracted towards them. Therefore, he who aspires to make any progress in the path of Devotion should renounce all objects that are adverse to God. The renunciation of worldly objects mentioned by this aphorism truly means renunciation of objects which tend to draw the mind away from God and drag it towards objects of enjoyment, towards this ephemeral world. The body and mind should be ardently engaged in, and thirst should be increased for, activities like meditation, remembrance of God, Kīrtana, worship, service of holy men and Satsanga, etc. Worldly objects whose acquirement or enjoyment is absolutely necessary for maintenance of the body or of dependent relations, may be acquired or enjoyed to the extent they are indispensable, but that also should be done under the control of the scriptures, taking that to be the command of God, without any desire for results, and with the object only of earning the pleasure of God. Objects enjoyed like this are known to be as good as their renunciation. On the other hand when an object is renounced and yet there is mental craving for it, the renunciation is not true renunciation. That is why the aphorism mentions that with the renunciation of an object it is necessary to renounce the attachment for it. In the Mahābhārata it is stated:-

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* विषयान् ध्यायतश्चित्तं विषयेषु विषज्जते।
मामनुस्मरतश्चित्तं मय्येव प्रविलीयते॥

त्यागः स्नेहस्य यस्त्यागो विषयाणां तथैव च ।

(Śānti-Parva 192.17)

> "True renunciation means renunciation of objects of enjoyment as well as the attachment for them."

It is through this form of renunciation that the craving of the mind for enjoyment will be overcome. A mind thus freed from all cravings for enjoyment can alone become the receptacle for holding Divine Love. On the realization of Divine Love, renunciation of objects of enjoyment comes as a matter of course. The Rāmacharitamānasa says:-

> "The fortunate soul whose heart is attached of Śrī Rāma gives up the wealth and glory of the world like the vomit."*

Why should one who has tasted the nectar, and has profited by it, any more cast a longing look towards poison? But renunciation of the poisonous objects of enjoyment is necessary even for acquirement of the nectar - for accelerating the heart's movement towards it. Supreme Bliss lies in renunciation of objects of enjoyment and developing attachment for God in their stead. The Lord says:-

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* रमा बिलासु राम अनुरागी ।
तजत बमन जिमि जन बड़भागी ॥

मय्यर्पितात्मनः सभ्य निरपेक्षस्य सर्वतः ।
मयाऽऽत्मना सुखं यत्तत् कुतः स्याद् विषयात्मनाम् ॥

(Śrīmad Bhāgavata XI. xiv. 12)

> "How can those whose hearts are attached to worldly objects enjoy the happiness which the devotee enjoys through Me, the soul or self (of all) - the devotee whose heart is centred on Me alone, and who has given up all dependence on worldly objects."

अव्यावृतभजनात् ॥ ३६ ॥

36. THROUGH CEASELESS BHAJANA (SUCCESS IS ATTAINED IN THE PRACTICE OF DEVOTION).

Bhajana (worship) is the primary factor in the practice of Devotion, this is both a discipline and the goal. For one who has attained Divine Love, ceaseless, uninterrupted Bhajana become natural; and one who aspires to develop Divine Love should begin to practise ceaseless Bhajana. He who seeks either salvation or Divine Love without the practice of Bhajana is under a delusion. Goswāmī Tulasīdāsjī says:-

> "Butter may be rather churned out of water; and oil may be pressed out of sand; but without Bhajana none can

cross the ocean of births and re-births;
the truth is unshakable."*

Therefore, the practice of Bhajana is indispensable. It has, again, a special value and significance so far as the practicant following the path of Devotion is concerned. If after withdrawing the mind from worldly objects, it is not fixed on God, it is bound to return with velocity to worldly objects. Renunciation of worldly objects is Vairāgya (dispassion), and Bhajana is Abhyāsa (practice). Through dispassion and practice, Divine Love in its purest form is attained. The Bhajana which is irregular, which has no continuity, which is practised one day and abandoned the next, is not ceaseless. Bhajana based on Love or reverence. Success is attained only in the Bhajana which continues without any break, and which is governed by the sentiment of reverence. In his Aphorisms on Yoga, Maharṣi Patañjali says:-

स तु दीर्घकालनैरन्तर्यसत्कारासेवितो दृढभूमिः।
(1.14)

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* बारि मथें घृत होइ बरु सिकता ते बरु तेल।
बिनु हरि भजन न भव तरिअ यह सिद्धांत अपेल॥

> "Practice becomes rooted when it is ceaselessly carried on with reverence for a length of time."

Realization of God becomes easy through such ceaseless remembrance of God. The Lord Himself says in the Gītā:-

अनन्यचेताः सततं यो मां स्मरति नित्यशः ।
तस्याहं सुलभः पार्थ नित्ययुक्तस्य योगिनः ॥

(VIII. 14)

> "O Arjuna, he who constantly thinks of Me, without any other thought, I am easily reached by that Yogī, who is thus ceaselessly attached to Me."

Therefore, all activities of the body - eating, bathing and performance of other daily duties - should be carried on simultaneously with unbroken remembrance of God. Because of the background of Divine remembrance everyone of these activities will be transformed into an act of worship (Bhajana). There should be thus not a moment's break in the thread of continuous Bhajana. If remembrance of the Divine Form is not always possible, let the Divine Name be remembered. Through remembrance of the Name, the mind and the vital airs will be purified, and this purification will develop exclusive Love for the lotus-feet of God. The easiest method of the practice of the Japa of Divine Name is to fix the mind on the breath and mentally utter the Name along with the incoming and outgoing breath. There may be slow oral utterance together with the mental utterance. This Japa may be practised under all circumstances, whether the practicant is walking or seated, or engaged in any other activity. When the practice is consolidated, the mind will get over all distractions and will automatically engage itself in continuous remembrance of God. Almost all the famous saints and devotees have made use of this practice. Mahātmā Charaṇadās says:-

> "When Japa is performed through the breath, all doubts cease to exist."*

Similarly, Kabīr says:-

> "Remember (God) through every breath; this is, indeed, the best of methods."§

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* स्वासा माहीं जपेतें दुबिधा रहे न कोय।

§ साँस साँस सुमिरन करौ, यह उपाय अति नीक।

God's Form, glory, secrets, qualities, sports and Name - all this should be remembered, and the remembrance should be like the ceaseless flow of oil. This is ceaseless, uninterrupted Bhajana.

लोकेऽपि भगवद्गुणश्रवणकीर्तनात् ॥ ३७ ॥

37. EVEN IN SOCIETY, WHEN GOD'S GLORY IS HEARD AND RECITED (PRACTICE OF DEVOTION IS PROMOTED).

The mind should, no doubt, be engaged in constant remembrance of God: but when in the midst of other people, let the ears and the voice be engaged only in hearing and uttering the glory of God. The effort of the mind to practise constant remembrance of God will succeed when the senses are engaged in activities connected with God. Most of human activities are based on hearing and speaking. If the ears hear only talks about worldly things, or the voice gives utterance to worldly thoughts, it should be regarded as almost impossible for the mind to succeed in the remembrance of God. But if the ears and voice are attached to God, and they find no time to do anything else, then the other senses and the mind will themselves become devoted to God. Therefore, the ears and lips should be always occupied in hearing or singing the Name, glory or sports of God. This is how the object of life may be realized. The realization of life does not lie in mere living, breathing, eating or procreating. If that were so, does not the tree live? Do not the bellows take in air? Do not beasts eat and procreate? That is why the Bhāgavata says:-

> "He through whose passage of the ears the Name and glory of God have not entered, that sub-human creature in the shape of man is worse than a dog, a swine, a camel or an ass. O Sūta, the ears that do not hear the stories of the sports of God are like holes in earth where snakes dwell; the tongue that does not sing the praises of God is as useless as the tongue of a croaking frog."*
>
> (II. iii. 19-20)

Goswami Tulasīdās recorded this very sentiment in his Rāmacharitamānasa:-

> "The cavities of ears that do not hear the glories of God are like the dwelling-place of snakes;

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* श्वविड्वराहोष्ट्रखरैः संस्तुतः पुरुषः पशुः ।
न यत्कर्णपथोपेतो जातु नाम गदाग्रजः ॥
बिले बतोरुक्रमविक्रमान् ये
न शृण्वतः कर्णपुटे नरस्य ।
जिह्वासती दार्दुरिकेव सूत
न चोपगायत्युरुगायगाथाः ॥

> The tongue of him who does not sing the praises of Rāma is like the tongue of a frog."*

In the conclusion of the Bhāgavata it is stated:-

> "Words which instead of expressing the glories of God express only low, worldly thoughts are unreal, fruitless words. Words which reveal the glories of God, which describe the praises of God, it is such words that are real, propitious, virtuous, sweet and tasteful; it is such words that eternally acquire never and never flavour; it is such words that give

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जिन्ह हरिकथा सुनी नहिं काना।
श्रवन रंध्र अहि भवन समाना॥
जो नहिं करइ राम गुन गाना।
जीह सो दादुर जीह समाना॥

> supreme joy to the mind and dry up the ocean of man's sorrow."*
>
> (XII. xii. 48-49)

Therefore, the ears should be engaged in hearing the Names and glory of God, and the tongue in the Kīrtana of the Divine Name. Divine Love in its purest, unadulterated form is manifested through this practice.

Again, it is recorded in the Bhāgavata:-

> "The Lord said, - He who fixes his mind on Me, and hears, sings and praises the stories of My Name, glory and sports develops exclusive Devotion to Me."** (XI. xxvi. 29)

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* मृषा गिरस्ता ह्यसतीरसत्कथा
न कथ्यते यद् भगवानधोक्षजः ।
तदेव सत्यं तदु हैव मङ्गलं
तदेव पुण्यं भगवद्गुणोदयम् ॥
तदेव रम्यं रुचिरं नवं नवं
तदेव शश्वन्मनसो महोत्सवम् ।
तदेव शोकार्णवशोषणं नृणां
यदुत्तमश्लोकयशोऽनुगीयते ॥

** ता ये शृण्वन्ति गायन्ति ह्यनुमोदन्ति चादृताः ।
मत्पराः श्रद्दधानाश्च भक्तिं विन्दन्ति ते मयि ॥

> "Śrī Śukadeva said - O King, the person who with reverence sings of the birth and activities of God, the Lord of all Devas; gets absolute from all sins. Man attains supreme Devotion to God, which is attainable only by Paramahaṃsas, through hearing and singing of the sweet and blessed stories of God's descent on earth, His Power and the sports of His childhood."*
>
> (XI. xxxi. 27-28)

> "The Lord said - the pious soul who has gained Devotion to Me, the repository of intinite qualities, who am Brahma- the consolidated Form of Sat, Chit and Ānanda (Existence, Knowledge and Bliss), what other object remains to be attained by him? That is, he has attained everything else."§ (XI. xxvi. 30)

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* य एतद्देवदेवस्य विष्णोः कर्माणि जन्म च।
कीर्तयेच्छ्रद्धया मर्त्यः सर्वपापैः प्रमुच्यते॥
इत्थं हरेर्भगवतो रुचिरावतार-
वीर्याणि बालचरितानि च शन्तमानि।
अन्यत्र चेह च श्रुतानि गृणन् मनुष्यो
भक्तिं परां परमहंसगतौ लभेत॥

§ भक्तिं लब्धवतः साधोः किमन्यदवशिष्यते।
मय्यनन्तगुणे ब्रह्मण्यानन्दानुभवात्मनि॥

The hearing and Kīrtana of the Divine Name possess the greatest of virtues. The space through which the sound of the Name reverberates gets purified. He who can utter the Name with his last breath is bound to reach the supreme state irrespective of the sentiment through which it is uttered. The emissaries of Yama (God of Death) cannot enter the place where the Divine Name is sung. Therefore, it is the bounden duty of all to practise the Japa and Kīrtana of the Name avoiding ten sins against the Name.*

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* The ten sins against the Name are: (1) Censure of saints and holy men; (2) Discrimination between the different names of God; (3) Insult of the Preceptor; (4) Censure of the scripture; (5) To regard the power of the Name described in the scriptures as exaggerated praise; (6) To commit sin under the shelter of the Name; (7) To compare the merit of the Name with the merits derived from charity, sacrifices, fasts and other religious practices; (8) To advise irreverent, unwilling souls to practise the Name; (9) Not to accept the Name even after hearing its glory; (10) To remain attached to pride, fascination of the world and objects of enjoyment.

The Bhāgavata says:-

> "Utterance of the Divine Name even through its association with the names, of children, or in jest, or through indifference and contempt destroys all sins. The Name, taken either knowingly or unknowingly, burns up sin just as fuel thrown into a fire is burnt up."*
>
> (VI. ii. 14, 18)

The glory of the Divine Name has been sung by all scriptures and all saints. The following verse of Bhāgavata is worthy of being thought over. Devī Devahūti, addressing Kapiladeva, says:-

> "He whose tongue bears Thy Name is, indeed, the best of souls, even if he is a Chāṇḍāla (pariah) by birth; for he who performs the Kīrtana of Thy Name derives the merit of all austerities,

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* साङ्केत्यं पारिहास्यं वा स्तोभं हेलनमेव वा ।
वैकुण्ठनामग्रहणमशेषाघहरं विदुः ॥
अज्ञानादथवा ज्ञानादुत्तमश्लोकनाम यत् ।
सङ्कीर्तितमघं पुंसो दहेदेधो यथानलः ॥

> of all Yajñās (sacrifices) of bath in all sacred waters, and of study of the Vedas."* (III. xxiii. 7)

Again,

> "A person involuntarily shouting ' ' (adoration to Hari) when he either slips falls from a height, sneezes or suffers from sorrow, is released from all his sins. Just as the sun removes the darkness of mountain caves, just as the powerful wind cuts up a heavy cloud and forces it to disappear, even so the Kīrtana of the Divine Name, or Divine glory, entering the heart, brings all sorrow to an end."§(XII. xii. 46-47)

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* अहो बत श्वपचोऽतो गरीयान्
यज्जिह्वाग्रे वर्तते नाम तुभ्यम् ।
तेपुस्तपस्ते जुहुवुः सस्नुरार्या
ब्रह्मानूचुर्नाम गृणन्ति ये ते ॥

§ पतितः स्खलितश्चार्तः क्षुत्त्वा वा विवशो ब्रुवन् ।
हरये नम इत्युच्चैर्मुच्यते सर्वपातकात् ॥
सङ्कीर्त्यमानो भगवाननन्तः
श्रुतानुभावो व्यसनं हि पुंसाम् ।
प्रविश्य चित्तं विधुनोत्यशेषं
यथा तमोऽर्कोऽभ्रमिवातिवातः ॥

This is the result of uttering the Name unconsciously and mechanically. But when it is uttered with reverence, how great and noble should be the result? That is why Tulasīdāsjī says:-

> "God's Name when uttered even mechanically burns up the accumulated sins of many births.
>
> The devotee who chants His Name with reverence crosses the ocean of metempsychosis as easily as one steps over the water held in the hoof-mark of a cow."*

Therefore, the constant practice of Kīrtana, hearing and remembrance of the Name, glory and power of God is undoubtedly the best and supreme method for the attainment of Devotion.

मुख्यतस्तु महत्कृपयैव भगवत्कृपालेशाद्वा ॥ ३८ ॥

38. BUT THE PRIMARY MEANS (OF ATTAINING DIVINE LOVE), IS GRACE OF MAHĀPURUSHA (GREAT SOULS, WHO HAVE ATTAINED DIVINE LOVE), OR EVEN AN IOTA OF DIVINE GRACE.

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*
बिबसहुँ जासु नाम नर कहहीं । जनम अनेक रचित अघ दहहीं ॥
सादर सुमिरन जे नर करहीं । भव बारिधि गोपद इव तरहीं ॥

After pointing out the need for renunciation of worldly objects and attachment for such object on the one hand, and pursuing ceaseless Bhajana, and hearing and Kīrtana of the glory and Name of God, on the other, another means is now mentioned which is so effectual that once this is attained the other practices follow as a matter of course. This is the grace of a Mahāpuruṣa (great soul). The Mahāpuruṣa is by nature gracious, but it is very difficult to follow him with faith and reverence. Through the association of a Mahāpuruṣa, the devotee is automatically cured of the attraction for worldly objects. In his company he gets the privilege of hearing and singing the Names of God; and what is constantly heard and seen is bound to make an impression on the mind. This is how remembrance of God becomes easy and natural for him. It has, however, to be born in mind that the Mahāpuruṣa whose very grace is said to be sufficient to bless one with Divine Love is not one who possesses mere knowledge of the scriptures, or bears on ideal conduct; he is one who has realized God, he is a devotee who has developed this Love himself. The glory of such a Love intoxicated devotee is very great. That is why the Ṛṣis, who were masters of Karmakāṇḍa, whose bodies had been soiled with the smoke rising from sacrificial pits, addressing Sūta, who was doing out the nectar of Divine Glory to them, said:-

> "O gentle Sūta, not to speak of smaller achievements like attainment of heaven, the value of even a moment's contact with associates of God, who possess this Love, cannot be compared to even salvation, which destroys re-birth. Earthly possessions like sovereignty, etc., cannot even be mentioned for this comparison."*
>
> (Śrīmad Bhāgavata I. xviii. 13)

Echoing this very thought, the Rāmacharitamānasa says:-

> "O brother, if we place the pleasure of heaven and the bliss of salvation on one side of the scale!
> All that pleasure combined cannot equal in weight the bliss of a moment's Satsanga."§

Here the glory is sung not of the Satsanga, which through purification of the heart leads one to salvation. For the couplet points out that it is improper to compare the joy of salvation to even a moment's Satsanga of this type. Satsanga here means the Sanga (association) of the devotee who having realized God has renounced Mokṣa (salvation) itself because of his absorption in the Love of God; it means the association of an eternal partner in the sports of the Lord, the repository of all Divine Glory and all Love, who can bless the Jīva not only with salvation, but can endow him with Bhakti in the form of Divine Love. Mokṣa (salvation) is not sought after by a Lover of God. On the contrary, he denounces the desire for Mukti (salvation) as an evil desire, which is an obstacle to the growth of Divine Love. He who gains the grace of such a Lover of God and earns the privilege of his association, easily succeeds in captivating the Lord Himself - the Lord who cannot be captivated through Yoga, Jn̄āna and other practices. That is why the Lord Himself, addressing His friend and associate Uddhava, said:-

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* तुलयाम लवेनापि न स्वर्गं नापुनर्भवम् ।
भगवत्सङ्गिसङ्गस्य मर्त्यानां किमुताशिषः ॥

§ तात स्वर्ग अपबर्ग सुख धरिअ तुला एक अंग ।
तूल न ताहि सकल मिलि जो सुख लव सतसंग ॥

> "O Uddhava, Yoga, Jn̄āna (Knowledge), practice of Dharma, study of the Vedas, practice of austerities, renunciation, performance of sacrifices and works of public utility, such as, the excavation of wells, tanks, etc., offering sacrificial fees, observance of fasts, undertaking pilgrimages, self-restraint, observing

> religious rules - all this cannot captivate Me. But I am easily captivated through Satsanga which uproots all worldly attachments."*
> (Śrīmad Bhāgavata XI. xii. 1-2)

The reason for this is that the other disciplines when pursued with interested motives bring earthly or heavenly enjoyment, and when pursued disinterestedly purify the heart and bring salvation. The only discipline that captivates God Himself, the Divine Sporter, is pure, exclusive Love, which is altogether independent, and which cannot be attained by any of the disciplines mentioned above. It is only through the supreme grace of the Love-intoxicated devotee, who is a partner in the sports of the Lord, that this Love can be attained. Says Goswāmī Tulasīdās:-

> "Bhakti, which is independent and the repository of all happiness, cannot be attained by the Jīva without Satsanga."§

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* न रोधयति मां योगो न सांख्यं धर्म एव च ।
न स्वाध्यायस्तपस्त्यागो नेष्टापूर्तं न दक्षिणा ॥
व्रतानि यज्ञश्छन्दांसि तीर्थानि नियमा यमाः ।
यथावरुन्धे सत्सङ्गः सर्वसङ्गापहो हि माम् ॥

§ भगति सुतंत्र सकल सुख खानी । बिनु सतसंग न पावहिं प्रानी ॥

But if God wills it, He can endow a soul with this Love; even an iota of His grace can bring the gift of this Love. Goswāmī Tulasīdās again says:-

> "There is no Lord more compassionate than Śrī Rāma, through even an iota of whose grace a vicious soul like Tulasīdās attained supreme rest (Peace)."*

But even this iota of Divine grace, which is being eternally showered on us, can be obtained by the Jīva only through the grace of Mahātmās, who are in direct communion with God. Therefore, the association of Love-intoxicated saints is the best and surest method of attaining Divine Love. Such association, however, cannot be obtained merely for the asking. That is why in the next aphorism Devarṣi Nārada describes this association as scarce and rare.

महत्सङ्गस्तु दुर्लभोऽगम्योऽमोघश्च ॥ ३९ ॥

39. BUT CONTACT WITH MAHĀPURUSHAS IS SCARCE, DIFFICULT TO ATTAIN AND YET UNFAILING IN ITS EFFECT.

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* जाकी कृपा लवलेस ते मतिमंद तुलसीदासहूँ ।
पायो परम बिश्रामु राम समान प्रभु नाहीं कहूँ ॥

In this world, it is very difficult to obtain the contact of a soul who is devoted to the duties pertaining to his station in life, whose conduct is righteous, whose nature is saintly, and who possesses the divine virtues. Like the genuine diamond, true virtuous souls are scarce among fraternities of so-called holy men and religious instructors; but on a careful search it is not altogether impossible to discover persons who may be regarded as righteous, who are masters of ritual, and even Jñānis (enlightened souls). But the Mahātmā, whose very grace can bring one the gift of Divine Love, which is eagerly sought after by Yogis and Jñānis alike, is very, very scarce. That is why the contact with such Mahātmā is regarded as very rare. It is difficult to recognize such a Mahātmā, even if one happens to meet him. For even a hypocrite or an actor can to a certain extent assume the external behaviour of a Mahātmā. To shed tears, to weep, to laugh and to shout are not the only signs of a Lover of God. There may be many external causes through which these outward expressions may appear. Moreover, there may be true Lovers of God, who have gone beyond the stage which is marked by these expressions, but whose external conduct is beyond the ken of ordinary people. True Lovers of God will never ask others to recognize them as such. Moreover, who will give this recognition for the asking? That is why it is very difficult to recognize such a desireless

Divine Lover. That is why he is described as 'scarce'. But the blessed contact with such a Mahātmā, made even unknowingly, will not go in vain, because it is unfailing in its effect. When the association of an ordinary holy man, who is virtuous and learned, brings purification of the heart and removes all sin, all fever and fret and spiritual poverty; the contact with Mahātmās, whose heart overflows with Divine Love, who are embodiments of Bliss and Love, whose remembrance alone destroys sin, will never fail to produce its benign effect.

Just as a man gone to sleep when the night was darkest and continuing to sleep even after sunrise cannot see the light until he is awake, although the world is flooded with light as soon as the sun rises; just as a man of wealth legally transfers his property to a poor man whom he loves, and the poor man immediately becomes wealthy; but not knowing that the account had been transferred to him, he continues to imagine himself to be poor, similarly, even the unconscious contact of a Lover of God dispels darkness in the form of sin and ignorance, reveals the sun of Knowledge, and confers the incomparable gift of Divine Love, but unless and until one comes to know of it, he remains ignorant of the gift, and fails to derive joy from it. But he does not remain ignorant of this state for any appreciable length of time. That is why the contact with a great soul has been described as unfailing in its effect.

soul has been described as unfailing in its effect.

लभ्यतेऽपि तत्कृपयैव ॥ ४० ॥

40. THE CONTACT (WITH MAHĀPURUSHAS) BECOMES POSSIBLE THROUGH HIS (GOD'S) GRACE.

It is doubtless true that contact with a saint, who answers the above description, is obtained only through the grace of God. He whom God desires to draw unto Him, to Him God sends His Lover, who possesses the power to bind down God to Himself, nay, who has identified himself with God. In fact, divine grace and contact with a Lover of God are mutually interdependent. Without this contact, devine grace cannot be felt and recognized; and without grace, the contact does not take place. Śrī Bibhīṣana felt this grace when he met the great devotee, Śrī Hanumān. That is why he said:-

> "O Hanumān, I have now gathered hope. Without the grace of Hari contact with a saint cannot take place."*

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* अब मोहि भा भरोस हनुमंता ।
बिनु हरिकृपा मिलहिं नहिं संता ॥

तस्मिंस्तज्जने भेदाभावात् ॥ ४१ ॥

41. BETWEEN GOD AND HIS DEVOTEE THERE IS NO DIFFERENCE.

The devotee is none other than God Himself (ब्रह्मविद् ब्रह्मैव भवति). He who serves a devotee, serves God Himself. The devotee resides in the heart of God, and God resides in the heart of the devotee. The Lord Himself says in the Bhāgavata:-

> "Devotees are my heart, and I am the heart of devotees. They know nobody else than I; and I know nobody else than they."*
>
> (IX. iv.68)

Śrī Bharata chants the name of Śrī Rāma and Śrī Rāma chants the Name of Śrī Bharata:-

> "Is there such a Lover of Śrī Rāma as Bharata? The entire world chants Śrī Rāma's Name, but Śrī Rāma chants Bharata's name."§

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* साधवो हृदयं मह्यं साधूनां हृदयं त्वहम् ।
मदन्यत् ते न जानन्ति नाहं तेभ्यो मनागपि ॥

§ भरत सरिस को राम सनेही ।

जग जपु राम रामु जप जेही ॥

Referring to the Gopīs, the Lord says:-

> "O Arjuna, My glory, My worship, faith in Me, and the secret thoughts of My heart, are known only to the Gopīs; none else knows them."*

What difference can there be between such a Lover of God and God Himself? The Lord says: "He who worships Me through Love resides in Me, and I reside in him."**

Such a Lover gets so much absorbed in God that he loses all consciousness of his external form and begins to feel only the Form of God. In the course of their search for the Lord, the Gopis lost themselves so much in the Lord that they began to imitate His sports. Says Nandadās:-

> "They imitated the various sports of
> Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the Enchanter, the Darling,
> the sweet, Lover.

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* मन्माहात्म्यं मत्सपर्यां मच्छ्रद्धां मन्मनोगतम् ।
जानन्ति गोपिकाः पार्थ नान्ये जानन्ति तत्त्वतः ॥

** ये भजन्ति तु मां भक्त्या मयि ते तेषु चाप्यहम् ॥

They wholly lost themselves, and knew
not who they were."*

तदेव साध्यतां तदेव साध्यताम् ॥ ४२ ॥

42. THEREFORE, CULTIVATE THIS, CULTIVATE THIS (CONTACT WITH THE LOVER OF GOD).

If you desire to be blessed with Divine Love, crave with all your heart for the contact of a Mahāpurusa (great soul), who is a Lover of God. Through divine grace such contact will be obtained, it will relieve you of all sins and woes and bestow on you the boon of Divine Love. There is a beautiful mystery about this. Imagine the existence of a powerful monarch who is also a great Lover. Love, however, cannot be cultivated with everyone. In his Court and throughout the kingdom, the monarch can give a free demonstration of his power and glory, but he cannot reveal the secret of his Love to anybody. An ordinary subject of the king can obtain his interview according to the conventional rules, and can speak to him so long as, and in the manner, permitted by those rules, but cannot openly ask him about the secret of his Love, nor can the king himself reveal the same to that subject. If the subject desires to enter the realm of the king's Love, he will have to seek the association of a lover of the king, who is exclusively devoted to the king, who has no relation with the king except that of personal love (love which is beyond the realm of the State) and with whom the king openly discusses love topics. He will have to earn the confidence of the love, who will then reveal to him all the mystery of the king's love. He will have to convey his message of love to the king through this lover and will have to establish his eligibility before him. When the king will find the aspirant eligible, he will give the latter permission to enter the inner ring of lovers. Similarly, God does not reveal the secret of His Love through his own lips. He sent Uddhava to the Gopīs to take the lesson of Divine Love at their feet. Just as the most confidential friends of the sweetheart gather from her and her alone the mystery of the love of her lover as well as her secret experiences with him, similarly the aspirant gathers the secret of Divine Love from the devotee, who is a Lover himself. This secret is gained by the soul who is found to be eligible and before whom God desires to reveal the mystery of His Love. A Lover of God cannot reveal that mystery before anyone without the will and permission of God. In the first instance, the aspirant has to acquire eligibility. When the desire grows intense in his mind for attaining this pure, elevated Love, his heart begins to pine and wail for it. That cry of anguish of the heart is heard by God, who dwells within the heart of everyone; God, then, either directs or prompts a Divine Lover to approach the aspirant. There the eligibility of the aspirant is tested. If his Love is found to be disinterested and exclusive, if the aspirant can earn the confidence of the devotee through his conduct, then the latter will carry his message to God and begin to reveal before him the mystery of Divine love according to the direction of God. Thus, step by step, as his eligibility grows more and more secrets will be revealed to him, and finally the full grace of God will descend on him, and he will come to possess Divine Love himself. The King and his lover, having no access to the heart of others, might be deceived by a show of false love; but God, or the devotee deputed by Him, can never be deceived. Therefore, he who seeks to gain Divine Love must first acquire eligibility for that Love through a careful practice of the methods described by Devarṣi Nārada, so that he may be a subject of divine grace and regarded as qualified to associate with Lovers of God. Pari Passu he must intensely develop the desire for the company of Lovers of God, because without their company it is extremely difficult to gain Divine Love. Although such Lovers are fully qualified for salvation in the sense of attainment of identity with God, the latter does not give them salvation, because He has to propagate the message of His Love through them; nor do such Lovers entertain any desire for salvation which deprived them of the enjoyment of the Love-sports of the Lord. Although freed souls themselves, they come to, or reside in, the world only for the distribution of Divine Love. Their compassion is unconditioned. If the desire grows intense within us, then through God's grace and direction, they will certainly bless us with the gift of Divine Love inspiring us through their holy sight, touch and speech, they are constantly on the lockout for souls who are eligible for the gift of Love. It is their very mission to spread Divine Love. Therefore, gain by all means the company of these Lovers of God and crave for their grace!

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* मोहन लाल रसालकी लीला इनहीं सोहैं ।
केवल तन्मय भईं कछु न जानैं हम को हैं ॥

-o§§o-

EVIL COMPANY - THE MAIN OBSTACLE TO DIVINE LOVE

दुःसङ्गः सर्वथैव त्याज्यः ॥ ४३ ॥

43. EVIL COMPANY SHOULD BE TOTALLY ESCHEWED.

After describing the glory of Satsanga (association with spiritual souls) the Devarṣi now forbids evil company. Just as Satsanga promotes desires for hearing the stories of divine sports and discussing things relating to God, and habits and virtues like practice of the Divine Name, attachment to God, respect for the scriptures, right thinking, dispassion, the spirit of service, artlessness, humility, endurance, purity of body, mind and conduct, compassion, spirit of non-injury to others, truthfulness, continence, equability of temper and absence of pride, etc. and thereby transforms even an ordinary man into a virtuous soul and a great devotee; even so, the reverse of it, that is, evil company promotes sin and makes a man sensuous and worldly-minded, because in that company he hears only talks of worldly enjoyments and other worldly matters and vilification of others, and acquires love of pleasure develops licentiousness, lack of wisdom, vicious habits, desire for honour, pride, hypocrisy, arrogance, anger, intolerance, impurity, callousness, violence, untruthfulness, sensuality, and a turbulent nature. All the disreputable features of the demoniacal nature develop and grow through evil company. It stifles all the virtues of man and brings his life to ruin. It was the evil company of Mantharā which made Kaikeyī, otherwise a gentle, noble and loving soul, a source of utter gift to her husband, King Daśaratha, to her own son, Bharata, and to the whole kingdom of Ayodhyā, and ultimately brought on her the curse of widowhood, and the prolonged displeasure of her dearly loved son, Bharata. The evil influence of Śakunī was one of the main causes of the terrible destruction of human lives during the great Mahābhārata war. In the Bhāgavata, Lord Kapiladeva gives the following valuable advice to His mother Devahūti:-

> "He who associates with evil-minded men, who are given to the gratification of their carnal desires, and walks in their footsteps; goes like the latter to the dark regions of hell. Evil company takes away all virtues such as veracity, purity, compassion, thoughtfulness, wisdom, shyness, forgiveness, control of mind, control of the senses, etc.,

> and robs one of his wealth, prosperity and fame. Therefore, the company of evil men, that is, men who are agitated in mind, stupid and devoid of intelligence and who are mere playthings in the hands of women, should never be resorted to."*

Thus, although it is equally necessary for all to avoid evil company, it is doubly so for the aspirant who seeks Love of God. Bhagavān Śrī Rāmachandra, addressing Bibhīṣaṇa, said "O Bibhīṣaṇa, it is better for one to live in hell, than to be thrown by God into the company of wicked men."§ Evil company should not be taken to mean the company of immoral persons alone. Any object of the senses likely to induce evil thoughts and the desire for sensuous enjoyment, or lead the mind away from the path of God-Realization, may constitute evil company. A devotee should neither behold any object, animate or inanimate, nor hear, nor indulge in, any talk, nor visit any place, nor read any book or periodical, nor look at any picture, nor eat, smell or touch anything, nor entertain any idea which may fill his mind with thoughts of enjoyment. Let him bear in mind that the following ten are the main factors contributory to the appearance and growth of both good and evil impulses in man - (1) locality, (2) food, (3) water, (4) family, (5) surroundings, (6) environment, (7) literature, (8) topics of discussion, (9) vocation, and (10) form of worship. If all these are Sāttvic (pure) by nature, his association with them will lead to the growth of purity and virtue. If, on the contrary, they are Rājasic and Tāmasic by nature, association with them will constitute evil company. Such association will lead to the growth of ignorance and spread evil round about him. Therefore, evil company should be wholly and completely eschewed.

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* यद्यसद्भिः पथि पुनः शिश्नोदरकृतोद्यमैः।
आस्थितो रमते जन्तुस्तमो विशति पूर्ववत्॥
सत्यं शौचं दया मौनं बुद्धिः श्रीर्ह्रीर्यशः क्षमा।
शमो दमो भगश्चेति यत्सङ्गाद्याति संक्षयम्॥
तेष्वशान्तेषु मूढेषु खण्डितात्मस्वसाधुषु।
सङ्गं न कुर्याच्छोच्येषु योषित्क्रीडामृगेषु च॥
(III. xxxi. 32-34)

§ बरु भल बास नरक कर ताता। दुष्ट संग जनि देइ बिधाता॥

कामक्रोधमोहस्मृतिभ्रंशबुद्धिनाशसर्वनाशकारणत्वात् ॥ ४४ ॥

44. FOR THAT (EVIL COMPANY) BREEDS LUST, ANGER, INFATUATION, LOSS OF MEMORY, LOSS OF WISDOM AND TOTAL RUIN.

Thoughts of worldly objects, which bring momentary gratification to the sense at the time of their enjoyment, rather than of God and his mysteries and sports, are the root cause of all mischief. The mind gets attached to the object on which it dwells constantly, or most of the time. Evil company, that is, association with objects of enjoyment, or contact with worldly-minded people, through body, speech, or mind naturally develops attachment to worldly enjoyments. Attachment gives rise to desire. And desire is the root of sin. Desire, when satisfied, begets greed for more; and, when unsatisfied, takes the form of anger. It is, therefore, that in the Gītā Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa declares desire, which is an offspring of Rajas, to be mainly responsible for the commission of sin. Arjuna put the following question to Śrī Kṛṣṇa: "What is it that drags a man, as if by force, to commit sin, even though he is not willing to do so?" In reply to this question, the Lord explicitly says:-

> "It is desire, which appears also as wrath born of Rajoguṇa; it is not easily satisfied; it is grossly sinful in nature; know thou this to be man's foe on earth."*

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* काम एष क्रोध एष रजोगुणसमुद्भवः ।
महाशनो महापाप्मा विद्ध्येनमिह वैरिणम् ॥
(III. 37)

Though desire begets both greed and anger, only a fraction of man's desires is satisfied in this world, and the rest remains unsatisfied. Failure produces anger, and anger, in its turn, brings about loss of discrimination. In anger, one loses all sense of what is good and what is evil, and like a malevolent spirit attempts only to destroy. This insensibility brings about loss of memory, and loss of memory brings in its turn loss of reason. Loss of reason drags him away from the path of virtue, wherein lies his ultimate good, both in this world and the next, and brings about his ruin. This very idea has been enunciated by the Lord in the Gitā, Chapter II, verses 62-63, wherein He says:-

> "By dwelling on the objects of the senses, one develops attachment for them: attachment gives birth to desire: desire begets anger (when the desire is thwarted). Anger gives rise to infatuation, infatuation brings about loss of memory, loss of memory in its turn brings loss of reason; and loss of reason leads ultimately to ruin."*

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ध्यायतो विषयान् पुंसः सङ्गस्तेषूपजायते ।
सङ्गात्संजायते कामः कामात्क्रोधोऽभिजायते ॥

Association with worldly objects and contact with worldly-minded people are mainly responsible for one's dwelling on objects of the senses, which brings about his ruin. This is exactly what is meant by evil company. This should be totally eschewed.

तरङ्गायिता अपीमे सङ्गात्समुद्रायन्ति ॥ ४५ ॥

45. THESE (LUST, ANGER, ETC.) THOUGH APPEARING IN THE FORM OF RIPPLES IN THE BEGINNING, LATER ASSUME THE DIMENSION OF THE OCEAN (THROUGH EVIL COMPANY).

Man should be afraid of even faint traces of evil till they are completely obliterated. Just as fire under a load of ashes may be fanned by air into a huge flame, similarly suppressed evil may be revived through evil company and may assume a huge dimension. Lust and anger, when they appear in the mind, appear only as ripples; but through evil company they assume the dimension of the ocean and occupy the whole heart. They block up all the openings through which wisdom or reason might enter, and thus ruin becomes the inevitable result. None should, therefore,

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क्रोधाद्भवति संमोहः संमोहात्स्मृतिविभ्रमः ।
स्मृतिभ्रंशाद् बुद्धिनाशो बुद्धिनाशात्प्रणश्यति ॥

Referring to the Gopīs, the Lord says:-

> "O Arjuna, My glory, My worship, faith in Me, and the secret thoughts of My heart, are known only to the Gopīs; none else knows them."*

What difference can there be between such a Lover of God and God Himself? The Lord says: "He who worships Me through Love resides in Me, and I reside in him."**

Such a Lover gets so much absorbed in God that he loses all consciousness of his external form and begins to feel only the Form of God. In the course of their search for the Lord, the Gopis lost themselves so much in the Lord that they began to imitate His sports. Says Nandadās:-

> "They imitated the various sports of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the Enchanter, the Darling, the sweet, Lover.

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* मन्माहात्म्यं मत्सपर्यां मच्छ्रद्धां मन्मनोगतम् ।
जानन्ति गोपिकाः पार्थ नान्ये जानन्ति तत्त्वतः ॥

** ये भजन्ति तु मां भक्त्या मयि ते तेषु चाप्यहम् ॥

They wholly lost themselves, and knew
not who they were."*

तदेव साध्यतां तदेव साध्यताम् ॥ ४२ ॥

42. THEREFORE, CULTIVATE THIS, CULTIVATE THIS (CONTACT WITH THE LOVER OF GOD).

If you desire to be blessed with Divine Love, crave with all your heart for the contact of a Mahāpurusa (great soul), who is a Lover of God. Through divine grace such contact will be obtained, it will relieve you of all sins and woes and bestow on you the boon of Divine Love. There is a beautiful mystery about this. Imagine the existence of a powerful monarch who is also a great Lover. Love, however, cannot be cultivated with everyone. In his Court and throughout the kingdom, the monarch can give a free demonstration of his power and glory, but he cannot reveal the secret of his Love to anybody. An ordinary subject of the king can obtain his interview according to the conventional rules, and can speak to him so long as, and in the manner, permitted by those rules, but cannot openly ask him about the secret of his Love, nor can the king himself imagine that the impulses of virtue or stronger within him than the impulses of evil, and that therefore he could never be contaminated by evil. On the contrary, he should every moment take the utmost care to give up association with evil.

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* मोहन लाल रसालकी लीला इनहीं सोहैं ।
केवल तन्मय भईं कछु न जानैं हम को हैं ॥

-o§§o-

Divine Lover. That is why he is described as 'scarce'. But the blessed contact with such a Mahātmā, made even unknowingly, will not go in vain, because it is unfailing in its effect. When the association of an ordinary holy man, who is virtuous and learned, brings purification of the heart and removes all sin, all fever and fret and spiritual poverty; the contact with Mahātmās, whose heart overflows with Divine Love, who are embodiments of Bliss and Love, whose remembrance alone destroys sin, will never fail to produce its benign effect.

Just as a man gone to sleep when the night was darkest and continuing to sleep even after sunrise cannot see the light until he is awake, although the world is flooded with light as soon as the sun rises; just as a man of wealth legally transfers his property to a poor man whom he loves, and the poor man immediately becomes wealthy; but not knowing that the account had been transferred to him, he continues to imagine himself to be poor, similarly, even the unconscious contact of a Lover of God dispels darkness in the form of sin and ignorance, reveals the sun of Knowledge, and confers the incomparable gift of Divine Love, but unless and until one comes to know of it, he remains ignorant of the gift, and fails to derive joy from it. But he does not remain ignorant of this state for any appreciable length of time.. That is why the contact with a great soul has been described as unfailing in its effect.

soul has been described as unfailing in its effect.

लभ्यतेऽपि तत्कृपयैव ॥ ४० ॥

40. THE CONTACT (WITH MAHĀPURUSHAS) BECOMES POSSIBLE THROUGH HIS (GOD'S) GRACE.

It is doubtless true that contact with a saint, who answers the above description, is obtained only through the grace of God. He whom God desires to draw unto Him, to Him God sends His Lover, who possesses the power to bind down God to Himself, nay, who has identified himself with God. In fact, divine grace and contact with a Lover of God are mutually interdependent. Without this contact, devine grace cannot be felt and recognized; and without grace, the contact does not take place. Śrī Bibhīṣana felt this grace when he met the great devotee, Śrī Hanumān. That is why he said:-

> "O Hanumān, I have now gathered hope. Without the grace of Hari contact with a saint cannot take place."*

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* अब मोहि भा भरोस हनुमंता ।
बिनु हरिकृपा मिलहिं नहिं संता ॥

तस्मिंस्तज्जने भेदाभावात् ॥ ४१ ॥

41. BETWEEN GOD AND HIS DEVOTEE THERE IS NO DIFFERENCE.

The devotee is none other than God Himself (ब्रह्मविद् ब्रह्मैव भवति). He who serves a devotee, serves God Himself. The devotee resides in the heart of God, and God resides in the heart of the devotee. The Lord Himself says in the Bhāgavata:-

> "Devotees are my heart, and I am the heart of devotees. They know nobody else than I; and I know nobody else than they."*
>
> (IX. iv.68)

Śrī Bharata chants the name of Śrī Rāma and Śrī Rāma chants the Name of Śrī Bharata:-

> "Is there such a Lover of Śrī Rāma as Bharata? The entire world chants Śrī Rāma's Name, but Śrī Rāma chants Bharata's name."§

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साधवो हृदयं मह्यं साधूनां हृदयं त्वहम् ।
मदन्यत् ते न जानन्ति नाहं तेभ्यो मनागपि ॥

§ भरत सरिस को राम सनेही ।

जग जपु राम रामु जप जेही ॥

reveal the same to that subject. If the subject desires to enter the realm of the king's Love, he will have to seek the association of a lover of the king, who is exclusively devoted to the king, who has no relation with the king except that of personal love (love which is beyond the realm of the State) and with whom the king openly discusses love topics. He will have to earn the confidence of the love, who will then reveal to him all the mystery of the king's love. He will have to convey his message of love to the king through this lover and will have to establish his eligibility before him. When the king will find the aspirant eligible, he will give the latter permission to enter the inner ring of lovers. Similarly, God does not reveal the secret of His Love through his own lips. He sent Uddhava to the Gopīs to take the lesson of Divine Love at their feet. Just as the most confidential friends of the sweetheart gather from her and her alone the mystery of the love of her lover as well as her secret experiences with him, similarly the aspirant gathers the secret of Divine Love from the devotee, who is a Lover himself. This secret is gained by the soul who is found to be eligible and before whom God desires to reveal the mystery of His Love. A Lover of God cannot reveal that mystery before anyone without the will and permission of God. In the first instance, the aspirant has to acquire eligibility. When the desire grows intense in his mind for attaining this pure, elevated Love, his heart begins to pine and wail for it. That cry of anguish of the heart is heard by God, who dwells within the heart of everyone; God, then, either directs or prompts a Divine Lover to approach the aspirant. There the eligibility of the aspirant is tested. If his Love is found to be disinterested and exclusive, if the aspirant can earn the confidence of the devotee through his conduct, then the latter will carry his message to God and begin to reveal before him the mystery of Divine love according to the direction of God. Thus, step by step, as his eligibility grows more and more secrets will be revealed to him, and finally the full grace of God will descend on him, and he will come to possess Divine Love himself. The King and his lover, having no access to the heart of others, might be deceived by a show of false love; but God, or the devotee deputed by Him, can never be deceived. Therefore, he who seeks to gain Divine Love must first acquire eligibility for that Love through a careful practice of the methods described by Devarṣi Nārada, so that he may be a subject of divine grace and regarded as qualified to associate with Lovers of God. Pari Passu he must intensely develop the desire for the company of Lovers of God, because without their company it is extremely difficult to gain Divine Love. Although such Lovers are fully qualified for salvation in the sense of attainment of identity with God, the latter does not give them salvation, because He has to propagate the message of His Love through them; nor do such Lovers entertain any desire for salvation which deprived them of the enjoyment of the Love-sports of the Lord. Although freed souls themselves, they come to, or reside in, the world only for the distribution of Divine Love. Their compassion is unconditioned. If the desire grows intense within us, then through God's grace and direction, they will certainly bless us with the gift of Divine Love inspiring us through their holy sight, touch and speech, they are constantly on the lockout for souls who are eligible for the gift of Love. It is their very mission to spread Divine Love. Therefore, gain by all means the company of these Lovers of God and crave for their grace!

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EVIL COMPANY - THE MAIN OBSTACLE TO DIVINE LOVE

दुःसङ्गः सर्वथैव त्याज्यः ॥ ४३ ॥

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> and robs one of his wealth, prosperity and fame. Therefore, the company of evil men, that is, men who are agitated in mind, stupid and devoid of intelligence and who are mere playthings in the hands of women, should never be resorted to."*

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> "By dwelling on the objects of the senses, one develops attachment for them: attachment gives birth to desire: desire begets anger (when the desire is thwarted). Anger gives rise to infatuation, infatuation brings about loss of memory, loss of memory in its turn brings loss of reason; and loss of reason leads ultimately to ruin."*

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imagine that the impulses of virtue or stronger within him than the impulses of evil, and that therefore he could never be contaminated by evil. On the contrary, he should every moment take the utmost care to give up association with evil.

-o§§o-

WHO CROSSES MĀYĀ?

कस्तरति कस्तरति मायाम् ? यः सङ्गाँस्त्यजति
यो महानुभावं सेवते, निर्ममो भवति ॥ ४६ ॥

46. WHO IS IT, WHO IS IT THAT CROSSES MĀYĀ (WHICH IS SO DIFFICULT TO CROSS)? HE WHO RENOUNCES ALL ATTACHMENTS, WHO SERVES GREAT SOULS AND WHO DOES NOT REGARD ANYTHING AS HIS OWN.

He who seeks to swim across a river must strike his hands and feet against the water; he has constantly to proceed against and push his way through the water. That is how a novice in the art of swimming can cross a river. The moment he gives up the process of striking against the water, he is sure to be drowned. Even so, he who desires to swim across the terrible river of Māyā, which is so difficult to cross, has constantly to contend against his ego and worldly attachments, which constitute the water of this river. The river of Māyā is full of this water (in the form of the ego and worldly attachment;) he who cannot cast off this ego and worldly attachments will be covered all over with water and will consequently sink into its bottomless depth. That is why all attachments should be renounced. But the swimmer may get exhausted through constant exercise of his hands and feet, and there is further apprehension of his feeling short of breath. He requires at intervals some support to rest on for a while. Similarly, in crossing the river of Māyā, mere renunciation of attachment will not do; resting-points are necessary here as well. These resting-points are nothing else than the nectar-like teachings of holy men which provide the swimmer with new strength and thus enable him to cross the river of Māyā. Truly speaking, the aspirant who enjoys the privilege of serving a saint does not require to swim at all, he crosses it without any effort of his own through the grace of the saint, which serves as a stout barge to ferry him across. It is, therefore, that the Devarṣi advises all aspirants to take to the service of saints.

In the Bhāgavata the Lord says:-

> "Like a stout barge for those who are drowning in water, saints who have realized God and have attained Peace serve as the supreme refuge for those who are plunged in the terrible ocean of worldly existence."*

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* निमज्ज्योन्मज्जतां घोरे भवाब्धौ परमायनम् ।
सन्तो ब्रह्मविदः शान्ता नौर्दृढेवाप्सु मज्जताम् ॥
(XI. xxvi. 32)

Through the service of saints, who are always gracious, all sin, worldly attachments and the fever and fret of the world are easily got rid of:-

> "Just as resort to the God of Fire removes cold, fear and darkness, even so service of saints removes cold, in the form of sin, fear of rebirth and the darkness of ignorance."*

For the attainment of unalloyed Devotion to God in particular, service of the feet of saints is the primary requisite. This is corroborated by the following statements contained in the Bhāgavata and attributed to Prahlāda, the prince of devotees, and sage Bharata, the paragon of wisdom and asceticism who walked the earth in the guise of an idiot.

Prahlāda said to his father:-

> "The mind, whose utility lies in overcoming the evils of Māyā, does not conceive Love for the sacred feet of Śrī Hari, so long as one does not seek to sprinkle his body with the

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* यथोपश्रयमाणस्य भगवन्तं विभावसुम् ।
शीतं भयं तमोऽप्येति साधून् संसेवतस्तथा ॥
(XI. xxvi. 31)

> dust of the feet of exalted souls who have surrendered their all to God and claim nothing as their own."*

Sage Bharata, addressing king Rahūgaṇa, said:-

> "O Rahūgaṇa! divine Knowledge and Love of God cannot be attained through austere penance, sacrifices, charity, benevolent acts done while in the family, study of Vedas or the worship of the gods of Water and Fire and the Sun-god. It can be attained only by bathing the body with the dust of the feet of saints, that is, through the service of their feet."§

It has, however, to be remembered that service of saints does not simply mean living in their company or rendering them bodily service.

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* नैषां मतिस्तावदुरुक्रमाङ्घ्रिं स्पृशत्यनर्थापगमो यदर्थः।
महीयसां पादरजोऽभिषेकं निष्किञ्चनानां न वृणीत यावत् ॥

(VII. v. 32)

§ रहूगणैतत्तपसा न याति न चेज्यया निर्वपणाद् गृहाद्वा।
नच्छन्दसा नैव जलाग्निसूर्यैर्विना महत्पादरजोऽभिषेकम् ॥

(V. ii. 21)

Of course, that too is necessary and possesses a utility of its own; but so long as we do not act up to their instructions, do not follow their behests and regulate our lives according to their liking, our service must be regarded as defective. Bearing this in mind, we should constantly, and by every possible means serve the saints.

Our relations with the world constitute a serious obstacle in the way of this service. These worldly ties prevent us from serving the saints. The Jīva is bound by innumerable ideas like 'my home, my body, my family, my wealth, my relative, my residence, my estate', etc. All these ties of meum will have to be snapped. It is, no doubt, true that through the heavenly light, derived from the company and service of saints the darkness of ignorance in the form of meum is dispelled to a great extent; but even for seeking the association of saints some slackening of worldly ties is essential. Therefore, realizing these objects as full of sorrow, transient and born of ignorance, the sense of meum with regard to them should be totally given up. It should be recognized that nothing in this world really belongs to us. When the body itself - which we not only call our own but regard as our very self - perishes, is it not foolish on our part to claim other objects as our own? In order to be able to cross the barrier of Māyā, it is necessary to eradicate this sense of possession. He, who is able to achieve this, easily crosses Māyā.

यो विविक्तस्थानं सेवते, यो लोकबन्धमुन्मूल-
यति, निस्त्रैगुण्यो भवति, योगक्षेमं त्यजति ॥४७॥

47. HE WHO LIVES IN SECLUSION, SNAPS ALL WORLDLY TIES, TRANSCENDS THE THREE GUṆAS AND GIVES UP ALL THOUGHTS OF YOGA (SUPPLY OF NEEDS) AND KSHEMA (SAFETY OF ONE'S POSSESSIONS).

In the preceding aphorism three ways were suggested for crossing Māyā, and in the present aphorism four more are recommended. In the next two aphorisms five more ways or methods will be enunciated. It is not ordinarily possible to shake off the sense of possession while constantly living in the midst of objects, with which one is identified; the sense grows through constant association with such objects. Practicants are, therefore, advised to live in seclusion. The Lord, too, speaks of living in seclusion and developing aversion for society (विविक्तदेशसेवित्वमरतिर्जनसंसदि) in Gītā XIII. 10. However intensely one may try to pursue a course of spiritual discipline, it will be very difficult for him to fix his mind on God so long as he lives in a society of men who are in the grip of sensuality, or in surroundings which are full of worldly attractions. That is why practicants are advised to practise Devotion while living in seclusion. Along with this, it is necessary to snap all worldly ties in order to unite oneself by ties of Love with God. As one gets out of touch with society by living in seclusion, social ties automatically weakens. In addition to this, if one repeatedly contrasts this world of death and sorrow with the mystery, glory and truth of God, and ponders over the difference over and over again, these ties will perforce break.

The aspirant in the path of Devotion will, then, have to rise above and transcend the three Guṇas or modes of Nature - Sattva, Rajas and Tamas (the principles of Harmony, Motion and Inertia). The world reveals itself to us through these three Guṇas: nay, it is a product of the three Guṇas. Therefore, transcending the three Guṇas, or rising above the world, means nothing more than absence of attachment for, or dispassion towards, the objects of the world. He who is attached to worldly pleasures and craves for them is tied to the Guṇas, while he who is attached to God and is a Lover of God is above the influence of the three Guṇas. Why should one, who is above the three Guṇas, worry about Yoga and Kṣema? Inasmuch as he has transcended the three Guṇas, he has no attraction for this world; and he has no craving even for salvation, because, he is Lover of God. Yoga means supplying of one's needs, while Kṣema means the preservation of what is already in one's possession. This does not refer only to the material side of life; in the spiritual sense Yoga means realization of God, or the successful pursuit of a discipline through which God is realized; and Kṣema means maintaining one's progress in the path of God-Realization. The devotee in the path of Divine Love does not worry about Yoga and Kṣema in either of these senses; he remains wholly absorbed in that Love, and is naturally engaged in activities that are agreeable to God and are inspired by Him. It is God Himself, who looks after the Yoga and Kṣema of the devotee. The Lord Himself says in the Gītā:-

अनन्याश्चिन्तयन्तो मां ये जनाः पर्युपासते ।
तेषां नित्याभियुक्तानां योगक्षेमं वहाम्यहम् ॥

(IX. 22)

> "Those who are exclusively devoted to Me, and worship Me in a disinterested way, fixing their thoughts on Me. I Myself bear the burden of their Yoga and Kṣema, since they are ever united with Me."*

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* There lived a virtuous and unsophisticated Brāhmaṇ with his wife at Purī, where the famous shrine of Śrī Jagannātha, the 'Lord of the Universe,' is situated. He was a great lover of the Gītā, and used day and night to study and meditate on the verses of the Gītā.

As for one's material needs, even an ordinary devotee possessed of genuine faith should not worry about them. Those who cannot

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Although he had not yet developed the spirit of disinterestedness, he nevertheless possessed great faith in God. One day, he thought of examining the meaning of each word of the Gītā, from the practical point of view. While going through the book with this object in view he came upon the words ' वहाम्यहम् ' (I Myself bear the burden) of verse 22, Chapter IX. The thought came across his mind - Does this mean that God Himself carries all necessary provisions to the devotee? No, this cannot be the meaning; God must be supplying the needs of the devotee through other agencies. He, therefore, thought that the expression ' वहाम्यहम् ' failed to convey the intended meaning; so he scored through the word and wrote ' करोम्यहम् ' (I Myself arrange) above it.

Inscrutable are the ways of God. The Brāhmaṇ used to live on alms. It began to rain heavily one day. As he could not go out for alms that day, the Brāhmaṇ couple had to starve the whole day. The next day when the rains stopped, the Brāhmaṇ went out. Not long after he had left the house, a lovely boy, whose body was besmeared all over with blood, called at his house, and addressed the wife of the Brāhmaṇ thus: "This consecrated food has depend on God, and leaving the path of truth, virtue and righteousness, take recourse to sin for obtaining food, etc., are nothing short of

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been sent by Paṇḍitjī (the Brāhmaṇ)." The Brāhmaṇ lady was charmed to see his lovely face and hear his sweet, enchanting words. She was extremely pained at the sight of blood flowing out of his body. With tears in her eyes, she asked - "Who has been so cruel as to hurt you, my child?" The boy replied that it was her husband, the Brāhmaṇ, who had hurt him. The lady was taken aback at this reply. She said, "My husband is a simple mild-tempered man and a great devotee; why should he hurt a lovely child like you?" The boy replied: "I tell you the bare truth, mother: it was your husband who pierced my body with the point of a dart. He alone knows why he has done this."

Saying so and keeping the load of provisions (consecrated food) before her, the boy disappeared. Brooding over the sad incident, the lady failed to notice when the boy had disappeared. Being at a loss to understand the reason of her husband's strange behaviour, she awaited his return with an aching heart. When the Brāhmaṇ returned home at the usual hour, the lady related to him the whole story in words which though respectful betrayed grief and resentment. The poor Brāhmaṇ was unbelievers. There is a popular verse in Sanskrit, which says:-

> "In vain does the Vaiṣṇava (devotee) worry about food and other necessities of life. Can God, who sustains the whole creation, ever forget His own devotees? *

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dumbfounded when he heard the strange story from his wife. He was deeply moved when he recalled having scored through a word of the Gītā with his pen. Tears began to stream out of his eyes. He now realized that it was literally true that God Himself carried provisions to the devotee, who believed in Him and relied on Him. The Gītā is a verbal image of God. Scoring through a word of the Gīta was, therefore, equivalent to piercing the body of God. Full of remorse for his crime, the Brāhmaṇ fell down senseless on the ground. The Lord then appeared before His devotee and blessed him with His beatific vision. The Brāhmaṇ now rose from the ground and craved forgiveness for his crime and through an exuberance of emotion began to write the words ' वहाम्यहम् ' on every inch of blank space in his copy of the Gītā.

* भोजनाच्छादने चिन्तां वृथा कुर्वन्ति वैष्णवाः ।
योऽसौ विश्वम्भरो देवः स किं दासानुपेक्षते ॥

been delineated through these aphorisms. In the next chapter the Devarşi will proceed to delineate the nature of that Love, attaining which great devotees are easily able to scale the heights described above.

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TWO TYPES OF DEVOTION - DIVINE LOVE AND SECONDARY DEVOTION

अनिर्वचनीयं प्रेमस्वरूपम् ॥ ५१ ॥

51. DIVINE LOVE IS INDEFINABLE IN NATURE.

There is no difference between Love and God. Just as it is impossible to describe Brahma through speech - even the Vedas are unable to say anything beyond ' नेति-नेति ' (Not this, not this), - similarly the nature of Love cannot be described through speech. Even in the worldly plane we find that the joy we experience on meeting the object of our love, or receiving some news about him, or getting an opportunity to touch or embrace him or have a hearty talk with him, can never be described in words. The Love which yields itself to description through speech is the most external form of Love. Love is an emotion, - an impulse felt within the heart. Bhagavān Śrī Rāma sent the following message of Love to the Universal Mother, Śrī Jānakī, who had been living in captivity at Lankā:-

प्रकाशते* क्वापि पात्रे ॥ ५३ ॥

53. THIS LOVE MANIFESTS ITSELF IN SOME RARE QUALIFIED SOULS (DEVOTEES IN THE PATH OF LOVE).

It is an indisputable fact that the nature of Divine Love cannot be described in words, but when some privileged soul, who has drunk deep from the cup of Love, forgetful of his body and mind, begins to behave like one possessed, marks of this Love, however slight, begin to manifest themselves through him before the people. Rays of Love, automatically begin to radiate not only through the speech and eyes of such a Mahātmā, but through every pore of his body. Such manifestation of Divine Love is a direct revelation of God Himself. Such a revelation takes place only through some rare God-loving soul.

गुणरहितं कामनारहितं प्रतिक्षणवर्धमान-
मविच्छिन्नं सूक्ष्मतरमनुभवरूपम् ॥ ५४ ॥

54. THIS LOVE IS DEVOID OF QUALITIES, SEEKS NO RETURN, GROWS FROM MORE TO MORE EVERY MOMENT, KNOWS NO BREAK, IS SUBTLER THAN THE SUBTLEST AND IS OF THE NATURE OF EXPERIENCE.

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* Some read it as 'प्रकाश्यते'

The attachment we develop for a person on perceiving some good quality in him is liable to disappear the moment we fail to notice that quality. True Love, however, is not dependent on qualities. The true Lover finds no time to look into the virtues and faults of the Beloved; his Love is a spontaneous outpouring of the heart. Or the expression 'devoid of qualities' may be taken to mean that Love transcends the Guṇas. It is beyond the pale of the three Guṇas.

There is no self-seeking in Love, because in that realm there is no tinge of self-interest beyond the desire of seeing the Beloved happy. The Beloved alone is the supreme object to be attained by the Lover. Where there is the faintest desire to receive something in return the altar of Love is defiled by vile lust. That is why in true Love not the least trace of desire is present.

In true Love there is no ebb or decline; on the contrary, it goes on increasing for ever. Love knows no culmination. The Lover always feels that his Love is not up to the mark. In no circumstance does he find that his Love has grown to any extent; that is why every effort of his is naturally directed to developing his Love. There is no break or cessation in this process of continuous growth of Love. This sportless Love goes on increasing rapidly from day to day.

यः कर्मफलं त्यजति, कर्माणि संन्यस्यति ततो
निर्द्वन्द्वो भवति ॥ ४८ ॥

48. HE WHO RENOUNCES NOT ONLY THE FRUIT OF ACTION BUT ACTION ITSELF, AND THUS RENOUNCING EVERYTHING BECOMES INDIFFERENT TO ALL PAIRS OF OPPOSITES.

He who gives up all thoughts of Yoga and Kṣema cannot but renounce the fruit of action; or, even for renouncing thoughts of Yoga and Kṣema, it is necessary to renounce the fruit of action. In fact, the Devarṣi now proceeds to enumerate the characteristics of a devotee in the path of Divine Love. What he now describes represents the ideal to be reached by an aspirant treading the path of Devotion, and the natural state of the devotee who has attained Love of God. Whatever the devotee does, he does for the sake of God; he does not seek any reward for the same. He has no attachment either for Karma, or its result; he acts only as an instrument of God. But so long as he is conscious of the fact that he is only an instrument of God, that he works only for the sake of God, he may be said to have renounced only the fruit of action. He should be regarded as having renounced the action itself only when he no longer retains the consciousness of being an agent or doer.

When as a result of his complete surrender of mind and intellect to God, God destroys the ego-sense of the devotee and begins to act through him installing Himself in the devotee's heart, then alone will the devotee be said to have renounced all Karma and risen above the pairs of opposites. He will no longer have any relation with pleasure and pain, gain and loss, or possess the feelings, of mine and thine, you and I, and so on. But until this state becomes natural with him, he must try to rise above the struggle of opposite impulses by renouncing the fruit of action and relinquishing all actions that are ungodly or unnecessary. The Lord says in the Gītā -

> "O Arjuna, the Vedas (portion of the Vedas dealing with rituals) deal with the world, which is nothing but a display of the three Guṇas or modes of nature; rise thou, therefore, above these Guṇas, i.e. above the world (worldly desires) and above the dualities of pleasure and pain, and give up all thoughts of Yoga and Kṣema, constantly dwelling in Sattva (Purity) and devoted to Self, i.e. God."*

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* त्रैगुण्यविषया वेदा निस्त्रैगुण्यो भवार्जुन ।
निर्द्वन्द्वो नित्यसत्त्वस्थो निर्योगक्षेम आत्मवान् ॥

वेदानपि संन्यस्यति, केवलमविच्छिन्नानुरागं लभते ॥ ४९ ॥

49. HE WHO COMPLETELY RENOUNCES EVEN THE VEDAS, AND WHO ATTAINS UNBROKEN, UNBOUNDED LOVE OF GOD.

From the point of view of one who is yet on the way to God-Realization, the interpretation of the above verse of the Gītā - wherein Arjuna is advised to renounce the Vedas as dealing with the world, which is nothing but a display of the three Guṇas or modes of nature, - as meaning 'to become desireless' is but meet and proper. Renunciation of the Vedas really means renunciation of desire. But in the stage of supreme Love - of which the Devarṣi speaks - the devotee gets merged in an ocean of unbroken, undivided Love of God, so that his dependence on the Vedas automatically gives way. The devotee is no longer capable of correctly performing any Vedic rite or worldly action. In the path of Love, the rule is that when it grows the fetters of all rules and regulations automatically fall off. The scriptures themselves sanction this. In this stage the Vedas, finding their votary realizing their ultimate end, and being gratified through the supreme gratification of the devotee, relinquish their hold on him. Renunciation of the Vedas is not marked by an attitude of disrespect or irreverence towards them; it is due to the fact that the devotee has realized the aim of all the Vedas. The devotee does not deliberately renounce the Vedas; the Vedas themselves withdraw their control over him, knowing him to have realized the goal of existence. In that state, the devotee crosses the barriers of injunctions and interdictions imposed by the Vedas, and remains intoxicated with the indescribable Love of God; nay, he stays in this world as a living embodiment of Divine Love. Manifesting Himself in the form of Divine Love, God Himself begins to sport within the devotee.

स तरति स तरति स लोकांस्तारयति ॥ ५० ॥

50. HE CROSSES MĀYĀ, HE CROSSES MĀYĀ, HE TAKES OTHERS ACROSS MĀYĀ.

In the ecstasy of joy the Devarṣi, as if, shouts at the top of his voice that he who gets intoxicated like this with Divine Love not only crosses Māyā himself, but takes all those, who come in contact with him, across Māyā. He becomes a true saviour of the world. In the Bhāgavata, the Lord Himself says:- "My devotee sanctifies the whole universe" (मद्भक्तियुक्तो भुवनं पुनाति)

The question raised in the forty-sixth aphorism as to who crosses Māyā has been answered in the succeeding aphorisms. The means of attaining Divine Love, and the marks of those who have attained such Love, have

> "O dear, the truth about the Love between You and Me is known only to My heart, and that heart constantly stays with You. Know You that herein lies the essence of Love."*

Love is experienced through the heart, and the heart of the Lover stays with the Beloved. In the absence of the heart, speech will have no direct means to describe the experiences of the former even imperfectly. It is, therefore, that whatever descriptions we get of Love are mere indications of its nature, and hence too external. Without obtaining a direct experience of Love none can know what it is like, and he who obtains this experience is deprived of his heart. One who has taken a plunge into water, can utter a sound only so long as his face is above water, but when the body has sunk into the abysmal deep, it is difficult even to trace it. Even so one who is drowned in the sea of Love finds himself unable to speak. And whatever is said by those who do not dive deep, but only swim and float on the surface, is nothing but a description of the external surface.

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* तत्व प्रेम कर मम अरु तोरा ।
जानत प्रिया एकु मनु मोरा ॥
सो मनु सदा रहत तोहि पाहीं ।
जानु प्रीति रसु एतनेहि माहीं ॥

> "He who is drowned cannot speak; he
> who speaks is ignorant.
> The sea of Love is deep; some wise
> and clever soul alone can drown in it."*

मूकास्वादनवत् ॥ ५२ ॥

52. IT IS LIKE THE PLEASURE OF THE PALATE ENJOYED BY THE DUMB.

One who is dumb feels delighted when he tastes something sweet, he smiles, but he cannot describe the taste. Even so a Lover of God is immersed in joy when he obtains a direct experience of Love; he cannot, however, describe the nature of his experience to another. There is self-forgetfulness in Love. A Lover, therefore, does not know what he is, and what he knows. It is, therefore, that Śrī Rādhā once said to one of Her companions that She knew nothing of Love of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, She understood nothing about it, and that if at all She knew or understood anything about it, She had no words to express it. The only thing She knew was that the moment She felt His touch within the heart, She lost Her consciousness.

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* डूबै सो बोलै नहीं, बोलै सो अनजान ।
गहरौ प्रेम-समुद्र कोउ डूबै चतुर सुजान ॥

"Love constantly grows like the orb of
the waxing moon;
Only there is no full moon here, hence
it never reaches the highest point."*

This Love, residing as it does in the inmost recesses of the heart, is subtler than the subtlest and is only experienced through the heart. Says the great devotee Rasakhān, as if paraphrasing the aphorism quoted above:-

"Love is the fountain of all sweetness,
which is not dependent on youth, virtue,
beauty or wealth, nor tainted by
self-interest or thoughts of personal
gain, and which is unalloyed and free
from desire (of self-gratification).
Very subtle, very soft, very slender,
very remote,
Love is the hardest of all, constant
and unvaried in sweetness, brimful.

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* प्रेम सदा बढ़िबौ करै, ज्यौं ससिकला सुबेष ।
पै पूनौं यामें नहीं, ताते कबहुँ न सेष ॥

> All sweetness, spontaneous, disinterested, unwavering, sublime, unvaried in sweetness, constantly growing - such is pure Love, O Rasakhān."*

This Love is supremely blissful; uniting the devotee with Śrī Hari, the repository of all Bliss, it makes him an embodiment of Bliss.

तत्प्राप्य तदेवावलोकयति तदेव शृणोति तदेव
भाषयति* तदेव चिन्तयति ॥ ५५ ॥

55. ATTAINING THIS LOVE, THE LOVING DEVOTEE SEES NOTHING BUT LOVE, HEARS ONLY ABOUT LOVE, SPEAKS ONLY OF LOVE AND THINKS OF LOVE ALONE.

The loving devotee, merged as he is in the divine sentiment of this supreme Love, nay, who is an embodiment of blissful Love, sees all round him nothing but the dearest object of his Love; he is all Love and all joy. He fails to see any other object. The following is the utterance of a Gopī, who had attained this stage:-

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* बिनु जोबन गुन रूप धन, बिनु स्वारथ हित जानि ।
सुद्ध, कामनाते रहित, प्रेम सकल रसखानि ॥
अति सूच्छम, कोमल अतिहि, अति पतरो, अति दूर ।
प्रेम कठिन सबते सदा, नित इकरस भरपूर ॥
रसमय स्वाभाविक, बिना स्वारथ, अचल महान ।
सदा एक रस बढ़त नित सुद्ध प्रेम रसखान ॥

"In whichever direction I look
I find the landscape full of Śyāma (dark blue) -
The bowers and groves are dark.
The water of the Jamunā is dark,
The sky is overcast with dark clouds,
All colours are permeated with the dark colour,
People say this is something novel.
Am I mad, or the dark pupils in the people's eyes are changed?
The heart of the Moon and the scion of the Sun are dark;
The Musk is dark, as well as
Cupid, the conqueror of the world.
The neck of the blue-necked Śiva is also dark,
As if the dark colour has been broadcast all over the earth.
The letters of the Vedas appear dark.
The point of the tapering light is also dark.
Not to speak of men and gods,

The Formless Brahma itself has
assumed a dark Form."*

Another devotee says:-

"In the streets, on the bathing Ghāts,
In the alleys, in the orchards,
In the trees, in the creepers,
In the gardens, in the groves,
In the doorways, on the walls,
On the thresholds, on the windows,
In the diamonds, in the necklaces,
In the ornaments, in the body,
In the woodlands, in the bowers,
In the Gopīs, in the cows,
In the flocks of cattle in Gokula,
In the lightning and in the clouds -
In whichever direction I look, I see
nothing but Śyāma;

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* जित देखौं तित स्याममई है ।
स्याम कुंज बन जमुना स्यामा, स्याम गगन घनघटा छई है ॥
सब रंगनमें स्याम भरो है, लोग कहत यह बात नई है ।
मैं बौरी, की लोगन ही की स्याम पुतरिया बदल गई है ॥
चंद्रसार रबिसार स्याम है, मृगमद स्याम काम बिजई है ।
नीलकंठको कंठ स्याम है, मनो स्यामता बेल बई है ॥
श्रुतिको अच्छर स्याम देखियत, दीपसिखापर स्यामतई है ।
नर देवनकी कौन कथा है, अलख ब्रह्म छबि स्याममई है ॥

It is Śyāma, again, who is spread
before my eyes and has settled in
my mind."*

"This Love of Śyāma is something which
cannot be expressed through words.
The sky, water, earth, animate and
inanimate creation,
All appear painted in the colour of
Śyāma,
Brahma has vanished; Maya, too, has
disappeared.
No Jīva, no time.
Even one's own self has been forgotten.
What remains is the darling of Nanda.
There is no one left to confide the
secret of the heart.
As a matter of fact, no such secret
is left.

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* बाटनमें घाटनमें बीथिनमें बागनमें,
बृच्छनमें बेलिनमें बाटिकामें बनमें ।
दरनमें दिवारनमें देहरी दरीचनमें,
हीरनमें हारनमें भूषनमें तनमें ॥
काननमें कुंजनमें गोपिनमें गायनमें,
गोकुलमें गोधनमें दामिनमें घनमें ।
जहाँ-जहाँ देखौं तहाँ स्याम ही दिखाई देत,
सालिगराम छाइ रह्यो नैननमें मनमें ॥

> To whom and in what manner shall it
> be confided?
> While gazing on Hari, the heart got
> stolen,
> Now it is Hari and Hari alone who is
> seen on all sides."*

In that state, every sound that enters the devotee's ears is nothing but the melody of the Love-song of his Beloved, who is all Love; he ever remains enraptured by the dulcet notes of his Beloved's flute. Similarly, no other word but the Name of his Beloved would escape his lips. He would never feel tired of singing praises of his Beloved. In every word that he would utter, he would enjoy the incomparable flavour of the nectar of Divine Love; he would ever remain absorbed in quaffing that nectar with unabated zest. No room would be left in his heart for anybody else; the Beloved alone would enjoy undivided sovereignty and exercise fullest authority over it. No corner of his heart would remain unoccupied to admit even a shadow of remembrance of the existence of anyone else. His heart is transformed into the very image of Love for the Beloved. The poet visualizes this very state of the devotee when he says:-

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* कहि न जाय मुखसौं कछू स्याम-प्रेमकी बात।
नभ जल थल चर अचर सब स्यामहि स्याम दिखात॥
ब्रह्म नहीं, माया नहीं, नहीं जीव, नहिं काल।
अपनीहू सुधि ना रही, रह्यो एक नँदलाल॥
को कासों केहि बिधि कहा, कहै हृदैकी बात।
हरि हेरत हिय हरि गयो हरि सर्वत्र लखात॥

"We refuse to hear the sound of any other Name through these ears.
This thread (of life) is coloured in one single hue.
If any other name escapes our lips through inadvertance,
Let the mouth be sealed, and the tongue dipped in the strongest poison,
Ṭhākur says, such is the condition of our mind:
We are loth to give up this vow even unconsciously.
Let these foolish eyes be burnt if they turn to see anything else than the cloud-like form (of Śrī Kṛṣṇa)."*

All the limbs of the body feel only the presence of the Beloved. The senses make Him alone the object of their perception. The eyes constantly see the entire universe as full of Śyāma. The ears hear only the enchanting melody of His flute, which is nothing but a manifestation of śabda-Brahma. The nose constantly smells the divine fragrance emanating from His person. The palate incessantly tastes the nectar of His Love. And the body feels only the incomparable touch of the Child of Nanda, who is an embodiment of all Beauty and sweetness, the Lord of Love and the fountainhead of joy, and whose touch is most delightful. He is sound in Ākāśa (ether), the quality of touch in Air, light in Fire, flavour in Water, and smell in Earth. He permeates all that exists. It is He who is revealing, however imperfectly, His own incomparable Beauty through every object. Everywhere there is Love and Bliss alone. The whole universe full of Love, full of Bliss, full of enjoyment, full of Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Every object is permeated with Joy, Beauty and Sweetness. The perceiver and the perceived, both are full of sweetness; I and Thou both are sweet; everything pertaining to that Lord of Sweetness, the embodiment of supreme nectarean joy, is sweet. The Śruti says:-

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* कानन दूसरो नाम सुनै नहिं एकहि रंग रँगो यह डोरो ।
धोखेहुँ दूसरो नाम कढ़ै, रसना मुख बाँधि हलाहल बोरो ॥
ठाकुर चित्तकी बृत्ति यहै, हम कैसेहुँ टेक तजैं नहिं भोरो ।
बावरी वे अँखियाँ जरि जायँ जो साँवरो छाँड़ि निहारति गोरो ॥

मधु वाता ऋतायते, मधु क्षरन्ति सिन्धवः, माध्वीर्नः
सन्त्वोषधीः, मधुमत् पार्थिव रजः ।।

> "Sweet are the winds that blow, the seas scatter sweetness all round, let our herbs be sweet, the very dust of the earth is full of sweetness."

There is sweetness and sweetness all round. Thus, the loving devotee sees God, the embodiment of Love, everywhere, whereas God sees the devotee all round. The Lord says in the Gītā:-

> "He who sees Me everywhere, and everything in Me, never loses hold of Me, nor do I lose hold of him."*

The mighty and eternal ocean of the nectar of Divine Love in which the loving devotee finds himself merged in this state is wholly indescribable. This is what may be said to be the characteristic of Devotional Love, or Transcendent Devotion. This is the highest state of Infinite Bliss. Comparing this infinite Bliss with the finite, limited joy of the world, the Śruti says:-

> "Where none else is seen, none else is heard, none else is cognized, that is the state of the Infinite. When others

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* यो मां पश्यति सर्वत्र सर्वं च मयि पश्यति ।
तस्याहं न प्रणश्यामि स च मे न प्रणश्यति ॥

are seen, heard and cognized that is the finite state. That which is Infinite is Immortal, while that which is finite is mortal."*

That is why Love is always sweet, immortal, eternal, and synonymous with Truth itself.

गौणी त्रिधा गुणभेदादार्तादिभेदाद्वा ॥ ५६ ॥

56. THERE ARE THREE KINDS OF SECONDARY DEVOTION CLASSIFIED ACCORDING TO GUṆAS, OR ACCORDING TO TYPES, SUCH AS THE DEVOTION OF THE AFFLICTED, ETC.

The Primary, or Superior type of Devotion, through which the loving devotee attains his beloved Lord in the form of Love, has been so far discussed. It is this Bhakti which has been designated in the Bhāgavata as unmotived (अहैतुकी) or unqualified (निर्गुण)

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* यत्र नान्यत्पश्यति नान्यच्छृणोति नान्यद्विजानाति स भूमाथ यत्रान्यत्पश्यत्यन्यच्छृणोत्यन्यद्विजानाति तदल्पम् यो वै भूमा तदमृतमथ यदल्पं तन्मर्त्यम् ।

(Chhāndogyopaniṣad VII. xxiv. 1)

Devotion, and in the Gītā as the Devotion of the enlightened soul (Jñāna). In unmotived Devotion, the thought-currents and activities of the devotee naturally and incessantly flow towards God; that is to say, his mind is constantly attached to God by ties of disinterested and exclusive Love, and all his actions are intended for God (Bhāgavata III. xxix. 11-12). And the devotee of the enlightened type mentioned in the Gītā sees everything as Vāsudeva (Chap. VII. 19). These two types of devotees are the very images of God. Now, in the present aphorism, the secondary type of Devotion, which is of a lower order than the one described above, is being delineated. This secondary type of Devotion is of three kinds according as it is Sāttvic, Rājasic or Tāmasic, or as it is associated with the distressed (आर्त), the seeker of Truth (जिज्ञासु) or the seeker of worldly gain (अर्थार्थी).

The Devotion, which is intended for wiping out sins and is practised in the form of offering the fruits of action to God, or in which worship is performed as a duty maintaining distinction between the worshipper and the worshipped, is the Sattvic form of Devotion (Bhāgavata, III. xxix. 10).

The Devotion, which is prompted by the desire of acquiring worldly enjoyments, fame and earthly power, and is practised in the form of image-worship only, is the Rājasic type of Devotion (Bhāgavata, III. xxix. 9).

The Devotion, which is actuated by anger, the spirit of injury to others, hypocrisy and jealousy is the Tamasic or lowest type of Devotion (Bhāgavata, III. xxix. 8).

Similarly, the distressed, the seeker of truth and the seeker of worldly possessions practise three different forms of Devotion through three different kinds of worship; that is to say, the secondary type of Devotion is divided into three kinds, according to the difference of motive of the devotee.

Although the practice of this secondary type of Devotion is not directly conducive to God-Realization, the devotees practising it are, indeed, virtuous; by practising this Devotion they, too, eventually attain, by the grace of God, that higher type of Devotion which is the primary means of God-Realization, or Devotion in the form of Love, which is the same as God Himself. The speciality of Devotion lies in the fact that it ultimately leads to the attainment of Divine Love, which is so difficult to attain. That is why even this secondary type of Devotion has been assigned a very high place in the scriptures and is regarded as capable of being practised only by virtuous souls. For in every form of Devotion, remembrance and contemplation of God and dependence on Him are present in one form or another; and the direct result of these three - remembrance of God, contemplation of God, and dependence on God - is God-Realization. Therefore, everyone should make it a point to practise Devotion in whatever form it may be. But as far as possible one should try to practise the Sattvic form of devotion; or let one practise Devotion as a true seeker of wealth (अर्थार्थी), for the attainment of Divine Love, looking upon the accumulated treasures of the whole world as trash and an evil, and recognizing God as the supreme object, the supreme wealth.

उत्तरस्मादुत्तरस्मात्पूर्वपूर्वा श्रेयाय भवति ॥५७॥

57. (AMONG THESE) EVERY PRECEDING TYPE OF DEVOTION IS BETTER AND MORE FRUITFUL THAN EVERY SUCCEEDING TYPE.

The Rājasic type of Devotion is better than the Tāmasic type, and the Sāttvic type is better than the Rājasic. Similarly, the Devotion practised by the seeker of truth is better than that practised by the seeker of wealth, and better and more fruitful than both the types is the Devotion of the afflicted and the distressed.

-o§§o-

EASINESS AND SUPERIORITY OF DEVOTION AS A PRACTICE

अन्यस्मात् सौलभ्यं भक्तौ ॥५८॥

58. THE PRACTICE OF DEVOTION IS THE EASIEST OF ALL FORMS OF SPIRITUAL PRACTICE.

The glory of the path of Devotion and its superiority as a discipline over the paths of Karma, Yoga and Jñāna, etc., have been discussed in the foregoing sections. The author now proceeds to show that though superior to all other achievements, Devotion is the easiest to attain. Learning, wealth, high birth, high rank in the social order, study of the Vedas, austere penance, wisdom and dispassion, none of these is necessary for the attainment of Bhakti (Devotion); what is needed is constant and loving remembrance of God coupled with a childlike faith in His infinite mercy. When this is resorted to, the easiness of Bhakti begins to manifest itself. The Divine Grace is being eternally showered on all. Man is deprived of this grace simply because he does not believe in it. The Lord has proclaimed in the Gītā that He is the friend of all beings, and that one who comes to realize this immediately attains peace:-

सुहृदं सर्वभूतानां ज्ञात्वा मां शान्तिमृच्छति ॥

(V. 29)

Placing his faith in Divine Grace, one should imagine that he is bathing in the ocean of Grace, that above and below, right and left, the whole atmosphere is surcharged with Grace and that the latter covers all time, past, present and future. The moment he realizes this, he is rid of all sins and afflictions through the action of the same Grace, and becomes eligible for attaining Devotion. Wish this preliminary faith in Divine Grace, exclusive remembrance of God can be practised under all conditions and by all alike, irrespective of age, sex or social rank. One has to renounce or adopt nothing in this practice. Even though Divine Grace extends over all at all times, we have no faith in it; it is this faith which has got to be cultivated and strengthened. When this is done, all that is required for attainment of Devotion will be automatically realized by the practicant. "I am easy of attainment by such a person", says the Lord in the Gītā (VIII. 14). Devotion cannot be attained by any other means, it is attained only through the practice of Bhajana (Remembrance of God).

प्रमाणान्तरस्यानपेक्षत्वात् स्वयंप्रमाणत्वात् ॥५६॥

59. THE PROOF OF DEVOTION IS DEVOTION ITSELF, IT REQUIRES NO OTHER PROOF.

Practicants treading the path of Devotion themselves gain indications of the bliss of Devotion in the course of their practice. They come to possess direct experience of that bliss from time to time and hence do not require any external proof. A woman experiencing the joy of the marital state alone knows what it is like, it cannot be explained to a virgin. Even so, the devotee alone knows what the bliss of Devotion is like, it is not a thing to be verbally explained. The bliss of Devotion is enjoyed only by the virtuous soul who has renounced all desires and constantly lives in loving remembrance of the Lord with the sole motive of attaining Divine Love, depending entirely on Divine Grace.

शान्तिरूपात्परमानन्दरूपाच्च ॥६०॥

60. DEVOTION IS OF THE NATURE OF PEACE AND SUPREME JOY.

Peace and Supreme Bliss are direct manifestations of God. It is God Himself who is manifested in the form of Divine Love, that is why Divine Love is of the nature of Peace and Supreme Bliss. God, who is Bliss Itself manifests Himself through that Bliss aspect (known in Sanskrit as the 'Hlādinī' aspect)in the form of Divine Love and the Lover, and enjoys that Bliss revealing Himself again, as the Beloved. This is what they call His Sport of joy (आनन्दलीला). It should, however, be noted that the Lord, whose Love or Devotion is of the nature of Peace and Bliss, is not the same as the Saguṇa Brahma (God with Attributes) of the philosophers of the Nirguṇa school, whom they regard as tied to the Guṇas of Prakṛti, viz., Sattva, Rajas and Tamas. The Divine Form of the blessed Lord is eternally revealed through His Yogamāyā, who is His own Bliss aspect. That is why sages, who have attained the bliss of Self-Realization, and Jīvanmuktas (liberated souls) like Vyāsa, Nārada, Śukadeva, Janaka and Sanaka get enraptured by each one of his Divine qualities, the Divine ornaments on His Person, the Divine fragrance of His Body, the Divine melody of His Flute, and His Divine Beauty. If these attributes of the Lord were nothing but the manifestations of gross Māyā, which has given birth to this material universe and whose nature is to screen the Divine Effulgence, or if the Divine Form of the Lord were nothing but a product of Maya, they would not have been able to attract sages and saints, who had become one with Brahma, having cut the knots of Māyā. The beloved Lord of devotees is none other than the Paramātmā, living beyond the pale of Māyā, who is described by the philosophers of the Nirguṇa school as the taintless Brahma, who is of the nature of Sachchidānanda (existence, Knowledge and Bliss), and whom the Vedas attempt indirectly to indicate by saying 'Not this Not this' (नेति – नेति). To describe Him as the ocean of Peace and Bliss is no correct description of His nature. It is Love for Him which has been described as of the nature of Supreme Peace and Supreme Bliss, and it is this Love of which Devarṣi Nārada speaks in the above aphorism.

-o§§o-

DEVOTIONAL PRACTICES AND THEIR OBSTACLES

लोकहानौ चिन्ता न कार्या निवेदितात्मलोक-

वेदत्वात्* ॥६१॥

61. THE DEVOTEE SHOULD NOT WORRY ABOUT WORLDLY LOSSES, HAVING SURRENDERED HIMSELF AND HIS TEMPORAL AND SPIRITUAL INTERESTS TO GOD.

Having offered his all to God, what need has the devotee to worry about things of the world? Contemplation on his dearest Lord should be the only object of his concern. It is all the same to him whether those who are near and dear to him, or his resources in the shape of men and money and other worldly possessions, such as honour, etc., remain intact or perish; he is absolutely unconcerned about them; for having offered them to God, he has already made himself destitute in every way. Besides, where should he find the time or the mind to worry about these things, his mind having already been robbed by thoughts of that wish-yielding jewel (God), who takes away all anxieties? That past-master in the art of theft is never inclined to return the devotee's mind to him; and in the absence of the mind how should he worry about any loss? A traveller in the path of God-Love should, therefore, feel no worry about worldly losses. He should fix his thoughts on God alone, who is the root and substance of everything. It becomes natural for the mind of the devotee to do so.

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* Some read it as 'लोकवेदशीलत्वात्'

न तदसिद्धौ* लोकव्यवहारो हेयः किन्तु
फलत्यागस्तत्साधनं च कार्यमेव ॥६२॥

62. BUT UNTIL PERFECTION IS REACHED IN DEVOTION: WORLDLY ACTIVITIES SHOULD NOT BE ABANDONED, AND DEVOTION SHOULD BE PRACTISED RENOUNCING THE FRUIT THEREOF (I.E. IN A DISINTERESTED WAY).

When divine Love is attained, worldly (as well as religious) activities diminish automatically; one has not to renounce them deliberately, 'Offering' means offering a thing mentally. Moreover, when the higher stages of Love are reached, the devotee having risen above the ordinary rules of conduct, is not bound by duties which relax their hold on him. Such is the law governing that state. But he who deliberately flouts the authority of the scriptures in the name of Divine Love will find it most difficult to attain perfection in Devotion. That is why the author sounds this note of warning that worldly activities should not be deliberately abandoned. The practicant should continue to do his work renouncing the desire for fruit. He who carries on his duties in a disinterested spirit is automatically freed from anxieties concerning worldly losses, and worldly activities, carried on in a disinterested spirit for the approbation of God, prove helpful in the attainment of devotion.

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* Some read it as 'तत्सिद्धौ'

स्त्रीधननास्तिकवैरिचरित्रं* न श्रवणीयम् ॥६३॥

63. TALKS ABOUT WOMEN, WEALTH, UNBELIEVERS AND ENEMIES SHOULD NOT BE HEARD.

In the preceding aphorism it has been enjoined that worldly activities should not be renounced: they should, therefore, be pursued in the ordinary course. But the traveller in the path of God-Love should take particular care, even in the course of these activities, to avoid hearing talks about women, wealth, unbelievers and enemies.

(1) He whose mind is engrossed in thoughts of women can never contemplate on

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* Some read it as 'स्त्रीधननास्तिकचरित्रम्'

God. The thought of woman arouses passion, and passion is the greatest obstacle in the path of God-Love. Thought of woman arises from the sight of woman, as well as from hearing or reading stories about woman. A practicant, therefore, should never talk of woman, should never hear talks or songs about woman, should never see feminine pictures, should not read books or other literature bearing on woman, should not attend cinema shows or theatrical performances, should not discuss feminine character, should not write articles on woman, and should not stay in the midst of women or unnecessarily mix with them. The practicant, who is married, should try as far as possible to avoid contact with any woman other than his wife; whereas talking or hearing talks about women, and seeing of feminine pictures is injurious to all. The Śrīmad Bhāgavata says: "There is nothing in the world whose contact brings so much infatuation and bondage as the contact of women, or of those who are attached to women."* Again, in the fifth book, the contact of men attached to women has been described as the 'gate to Hell'. Just as men should avoid the company of women, even so women should avoid the company of men.

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* न तथास्य भवेन्मोहो बन्धश्चान्यप्रसङ्गतः ।
योषित्सङ्गाद्यथा पुंसो यथा तत्सङ्गिसङ्गतः ॥
(III. xxxi. 35)

(2) The thought of wealth gives rise to greed. Once greed is roused in the mind, the discrimination between right and wrong is lost, and leaving the right track man begins to follow the path of unrighteousness. Hence one should shun the sight of wealth and refuse to hear the proud talks of the wealthy centring round worldly enjoyments.

(3) An unbeliever is he who does not believe in God and the scriptures. There is no greater enemy of mankind than the sceptic, who does not believe in the existence of God, and says - 'All this talk is nonsense. There is no substance in that. God is only a pretense; has anybody seen God? The soul is only a fiction.' Contact with cavillers who prate like this, and denounce God and the scriptures, and hearing of their stories, breed irreverence towards God. There is no surer road to downfall than this sort of irreverence. Hence one should always shun the company of unbelievers.

(4) Truly speaking, there is no enemy in the eyes of a devotee. How can one who sees the whole world permeated by God, the delighter on his soul, who sees the universe as full of his beloved Śrī Kṛṣṇa, regard anybody as his enemy? The great Lord Śiva says, in the words of Goswāmī Tulasīdās:-

> "O Umā, he who is devoted to the feet of
> Śrī Rāma, who is free from lust,
> arrogance and anger,
> Sees the world as full of his Lord; with
> whom shall he quarrel?"*

But so long as perfection in the path is not reached, the practicant has to develop this idea mentally and should try to persuade himself that everything is a manifestation of his Lord. At this stage, if any person happens to harbour ill-will against him, or bears enmity towards him through some misunderstanding, the practicant should try as far as possible to avoid hearing any talk about this enmity. For it is very likely that through hearing of such talks anger may be aroused in him. On his own part, therefore, let the practicant regard none as his enemy other than his own untamed mind; and if anybody entertains enmity towards him, let him not take any notice of it.

Thought of woman excites passion, thought of money arouses greed, thought of an unbeliever induces disbelief in God, and thought of the enemy provokes anger. Therefore, as far as possible tales connected with these four should never be heard.

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* उमा जे राम चरन रत बिगत काम मद क्रोध ।
निज प्रभुमय देखहिं जगत केहि सन करहिं बिरोध ॥
-Rāmacharitamānasa

अभिमानदम्भादिकं त्याज्यम् ॥६४॥

64. PRIDE, HYPOCRISY, ETC., SHOULD BE ABANDONED.

The preceding aphorism commands us not to hear talks about woman, wealth, the unbeliever and the enemy. But the practicant, who refuses to hear such talks, should not fondly believe that he has overcome lust and greed for wealth, that he is a great believer in God, and that he has no enemies. Pride is invariably the precursor of a fall. Wealth, progeny, power, health, learning, wisdom, family status, pedigree, social rank, conduct in life, physical appearance, position and personal achievement, none of these should be a source of pride to us. Whatever things of value, or noble quality, the practicant may possess, or whenever he finds that he is progressing well in his spiritual discipline, he should attribute it to Divine Grace. Pride being extremely harmful should be wholly abandoned. Even the pride of being prideless should be driven out of the heart. Cultivation of the spirit of humility, modesty and docility is a sovereign remedy for uprooting pride. The practice of bowing before the representation of God also kills pride. Hypocrisy should likewise be renounced. Hypocrisy means simulation of virtues not actually possessed, either through desire for wealth or honour, or through the force of habit i.e., feigning the character of a pious man, a devotee or a self-denying man. The path of spiritual progress is closed against the hypocrite. He exhausts all his learning, intellect and resourcefulness in maintaining his false appearance. Absence of pride and simplicity are two sovereign helps in the path of Devotion, and Pride and Hypocrisy are two great obstacles. The last two evils form part of the demoniacal properties. By adding 'etc.' after them, the author has made an indirect reference to the other evils coming under the head of the demoniacal properties.* Therefore, according to this aphorism, all the demoniacal properties should be renounced by the practicant.

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* A detailed description of the demoniacal properties is contained in verse 7 to 20 of the sixteenth chapter of the Gītā. A gist of those verses is given below:-

"Men possessing a demoniacal nature know not what conduct should be followed and what should be avoided; they, therefore, possess neither purity, nor right conduct, nor even truth. They allege that the creation is without any truth behind it, without any moral basis, without a God; and is brought about only by the union of man and woman. It has no other end or goal but enjoyment of the senses. Holding this view, these malevolent men of small

तदर्पिताखिलाचारः सन् कामक्रोधाभिमानादिकं
तस्मिन्नेव करणीयम् ॥६५॥

65. HAVING OFFERED ALL ACTIVITIES TO GOD, IF THE DEVOTEE IS STILL HAUNTED BY LUST, ANGER, PRIDE, ETC., HE SHOULD DIRECT THESE TOWARDS HIM (GOD).

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understanding and fierce deeds, who have lost their senses, take birth only for the destruction of the world. Giving themselves up to insatiable desires, possessed of hypocrisy, conceit and arrogance, and clinging to false ideas through delusion (hoping to satisfy their desires through illegitimate means) they engage themselves in action with impure resolves. Giving way to untold cares till the last breath, regarding the gratification of desires as the highest object of life, held in bondage by a hundred ties of aspirations, given over to lust and anger, they strive to obtain by unlawful means (theft, treachery, etc.) hoards of wealth for sensual enjoyments. 'This I have gained today, that object, too, will be realized by me in due course; so much wealth is already mine and so much more will be added to it. I have got rid of this enemy, and shall dispose of others as well. I am the Lord, I am the enjoyer, I am perfect, powerful and happy. I am wealthy, and well-born, who is there to vie with me?

When everything has been offered to God, to whom are lust and anger, etc., to be offered? Just as the dearest Lord is the object of Love of His devotee, even so He is the object of the latter's passion, anger, etc. Since none else exists in the eyes of the devotee, who will become the object of these last impulses? This does not mean that even lovers of God are subject to the same type of lust, anger, pride, etc., which haunt the mind of ordinary men of the world. The need for overcoming lust,

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I shall perform sacrifices, I shall give alms. I shall make merry! Bewildered by thoughts like these and enmeshed in the web of delusion, addicted to the gratification of desires, they fall downwards into foul hell. Self-glorified, unbending, filled with the intoxication of pride and wealth, they perform nominal sacrifices for ostentation, contrary to scriptural injunctions. Given over to egoism, brute force, arrogance, lust and wrath, malicious, hating Me in the bodies of others and in their own, these haters, pitiless, vile among men in the world, I ever cast into demoniacal wombs. O Arjuna, cast into demonical wombs, birth after birth, and without attaining Me (failing even to get the human body which alone is privileged to realize Me), they sink into still lower depths."

anger, pride, etc., which are a part of the demoniacal properties, has already been emphasized. How, then, can this gross type of lust lurk in the mind of saints and devotees in the path of Love? How can they be subject to worldly attachment, hatred, malice and anger? How can those embodiments of humility have any trace of self-esteem in them? Even the seeds of these imperfections are absent in them. How can these evils remain when they have no craving for self-gratification? The sole aim of life of these devotees is to make their Beloved happy. "The desire to make Śrī Kṛṣṇa happy is the keynote of the noble sentiments of the Gopīs." There is no impression of the world left in their mind, the stand dedicated to their beloved Lord, having lost all sense of honour and shame, hatred, family prestige and propriety of behaviour, and forgetting all thoughts of the body, home, enjoyment and even salvation. The sentiments of these devotees being Divine, their lust, anger and pride assume a divine character. That is why even sages, who had attained salvation and had become embodiments of supreme dispassion, deemed themselves blessed in getting an opportunity of singing or hearing the songs of such amorous sports of devotees steeped in God-Love. The devotee whose mind has turned away from everything else, and whose heart craves for nothing else than God, cries in agony oppressed by the desire to see his beloved Lord:-

> "O Lord! O Dearest! O the sole friend of the universe! O Kṛṣṇa, the Enchanter of heart! O elusive Lord, O the Ocean of mercy. O Lord, O the Ravisher of Soul! O the Soother of eyes, when will You bless these eyes with a sight of Your graceful Form?"*

Śrī Rukmiṇī Devī, who was wholly absorbed in the Love of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, says:-

> "O Imperishable One! O the Enchanter of the three worlds! Hearing the praises of Thy divine virtues, which entering the heart through the passage of the ears remove all the fret and fever of the hearer, and of Thy Divine Form which is the supreme object of sight for those who are endowed with eyes, - my heart has lost all sense of shame and has become wholly attached to Thee. O Mukunda, the bestower of salvation! there is none who can be compared to Thee, in pedigree,

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* हे देव हे दयित हे भुवनैकबन्धो
हे कृष्ण हे चपल हे करुणैकसिन्धो ।
हे नाथ हे रमण हे नयनाभिराम
हा हा कदा नु भवितासि पदं दृशोर्में ॥
(Śrī Krishṇa-Karṇāmrita)

elegance of form, in manners, in learning, in freshness of youth, in wealth and in glory (Thou alone art Thy object of comparison). O best of men, You enchant the heart of the entire human race. O lion among men, on the approach of the time of marriage (time of union with Thee) where is the girl (i.e., the devotee) of noble descent, accomplished and wise, who will not desire to be bound in wedlock to Thee. O possessor of lotus eyes, if I am not blessed with the sacred dust of Thy feet, which even great souls like Śankara, Lord of Pārvatī, seek to sprinkle on their body in order to dispel the darkness of their heart, know it for certain that I shall cast off this mortal coil wasting the body through performance of austere penances, and death through this process will win for me Thy grace, even though it be after a hundred births."*

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* श्रुत्वा गुणान् भुवनसुन्दर शृण्वतां ते
निर्विश्य कर्णविवरैर्हरतोऽङ्गतापम् ।
रूपं दृशां दृशिमतामखिलार्थलाभं
त्वय्यच्युताविशति चित्तमपत्रपं मे ॥
का त्वा मुकुन्द महती कुलशीलरूप-
विद्यावयोद्रविणधामभिरात्मतुल्यम् ।

The principal queens of Śrī Kṛṣṇa once addressed Draupadī thus:-

> "O pious lady, we have no desire for sovereignty over the whole earth, lordship over the domains of Indra, supernatural powers (Siddhis), the position of Brahma (the Creator), salvation or even a place in Vaikuṇṭha. Our sole ambition is to be able to place on our head the dust of Śrī Kṛṣṇa's feet scented by saffron on the bosom of Kamalā (the Goddess of Wealth)."*

धीरा पतिं कुलवती न वृणीत कन्या
काले नृसिंह नरलोकमनोऽभिरामम् ॥
यस्याङ्घ्रिपङ्कजरजःस्नपनं महान्तो
वाञ्छन्त्युमापतिरिवात्मतमोऽपहत्यै ।
यर्ह्यम्बुजाक्ष न लभेय भवत्प्रसादं
जह्यामसून् व्रतकृशाञ्छतजन्मभिः स्यात् ॥

(Śrīmad Bhāgavata X. Lii. 37, 38, 43)

* न वयं साध्वि साम्राज्यं स्वाराज्यं भोज्यमप्युत ।
वैराज्यं पारमेष्ठ्यं च आनन्त्यं वा हरेः पदम् ॥
कामयामह एतस्य श्रीमत्पादरजः श्रियः ।
कुचकुङ्कुमगन्धाढ्यं मूर्ध्ना वोढुं गदाभृतः ॥

(Śrīmad Bhāgavata X. Lxxxiii. 41-42)

Beatitude rolls at the feet of such devotees:-

> "He who has developed for the feet of Mukunda (Śrī Kṛṣṇa), the Supreme Bliss of Devotion, the entire glory of salvation rolls at his feet."*

The Love-intoxicated Gopīs, the crest-jewels of devotees, bemoaning the disappearance of Śrī Kṛṣṇa from their midst, said:-

> "O the chief of the clan of Yadus, those who take shelter under Your feet from fear of transmigration, Your lotus hands give them assurance of protection and fulfil their desires. O Dearest, place on our heads the hand with which You clasped the hand of Lakṣmi (on the occasion of Her nuptials), O Champion, the allayer of sufferings of the inhabitants of Vraja, Your sweet subdued smile curbs the pride of Your devotees. O Friend, we are Your dutiful servants, pray accept us in Your service and reveal to us the beautiful lotus of your face. O Delighter of our souls, O Remover

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* यदि भवति मुकुन्दे भक्तिरानन्दसान्द्रा
विलुठति चरणाग्रे मोक्षसाम्राज्यलक्ष्मीः ॥

of distress, Your sacred feet fulfil the desires of those who prostrate before them; they are constantly tended by the lotus-born Śrī Lakṣmī; they are the ornaments of the earth; they bestow peace and bliss when meditated on at the time of distress. O Dearest, place those supremely blissful and soothing pair of Your lotus feet on our heated bosom."*

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* विरचिताभयं वृष्णिधुर्य ते
चरणमीयुषां संसृतेर्भयात् ।
करसरोरुहं कान्त कामदं
शिरसि धेहिं नः श्रीकरग्रहम् ॥
व्रजजनार्तिहन् वीर योषितां
निजजनस्मयध्वंसनस्मित ।
भज सखे भवत्किङ्करीः स्म नो
जलरुहाननं चारु दर्शय ॥
प्रणतकामदं पद्मजार्चितं
धरणिमण्डनं ध्येयमापदि ।
चरणपङ्कजं शन्तमं च ते
रमण नः स्तनेष्वर्पयाधिहन् ॥

(Śrīmad Bhāgavata X. xxxi. 5, 6, 13)

This is how devotees, smitten by pangs of Love for Śrī Kṛṣṇa, weep and wail for Him. And now the sportive Lord, who plays hide-and-seek, as it were, with His devotees, hearing that loving appeal suddenly appears with a gentle smile on His lips and in a Form which enchants the three worlds, which even Yogīs find it difficult to perceive and even the highest gods aspire to behold, which captivates the hearts even of sages and seers and other liberated souls and enchants the god of Love himself, nay, which is the very essence of the beauty and sweetness of the entire world and the embodiment of Bliss, breathing entrancing music into His divine flute and diffusing Love, Bliss and Sweetness in all directions and shedding all round the divine radiance of His moon-like face, raining beauty and sweetness everywhere! What becomes the condition of those blessed and saintly devotees who are privileged to behold and enjoy this entrancing sight through their divine eyes and divine consciousness, nobody has the power to describe. This is a mystic experience to describe which there are no adequate words in the human vocabulary.

At this stage, the devotee automatically dedicates his all to the sacred feet of his beloved Lord, and in the exuberance of ecstasy cries out in utter disregard of the whole world:-

"Fain would I renounce my hearth and home, renounce the forest, renounce the town and the townsmen.
And renounce as well the precincts of the Banśībat (my favourite resort);
I would fight shy of none.
I can cast off this body and quit my abode; but tell me how can I forswear my affections?
For the sake of my Beloved, I would gladly put on the robe of a mendicant.
The world itself has gone mad, that they call me mad;
But I shall not prevent anyone from calling me mad;
I would fain desert those who expostulate with me, and would gladly renounce my father and brother;
Oh God, I would rather desert my mother, but I shall never disown Kanhaiyā (Śrī Kṛṣṇa)."*

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*
घर तजौं, बन तजौं, नागर नगर तजौं,
वंसीबट-तट तजौं काहूपै न लजिहौं।
देह तजौं, गेह तजौं, नेह कहो कैसे तजौं,
आज राजकाज सब ऐसे साज सजिहौं॥
बावरो भयो है लोक बावरी कहत मोकौं,
बावरी कहेते मैं काहू ना बरजिहौं।
कहैया सुनैया तजौं, बाप और भैया तजौं,
दैया तजौं भैया ! पै कन्हैया नाहिं तजिहौं॥

I shall live or die for Your sake, O Love, and at Your sacred feet. This is the sole desire of my heart. When everything I possess has been dedicated to You, even the elements of my body, when disintegrated after my death, will take up Your service.

Fearing lest the elements which constitute his body, when separated, may swerve from the service of the Beloved, the devotee prays thus to God with an anxious heart:-

> "Let this body be resolved into the five elements of which it is composed, and let these elements enter their respective sources; but I beg one boon of Thee, O Lord, with my head bent low in submission. Please so ordain that the water in my body may go and join the water of the well which is used by my Beloved for drinking and bathing purposes. Let the element of fire in my body go and merge in the looking-glass used by my Beloved; let the element of air go and reside in the blessed fan used by Him, and let the element of ether be united with the ether of the atmosphere in which my Beloved lives."*

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पञ्चत्वं तनुरेतु भूतनिवहाः स्वांशे विशन्तु स्फुटं
धातारं प्रणिपत्य हन्त शिरसा तत्रापि याचे वरम् ।
तद्वापीषु पयस्तदीयमुकुरे ज्योतिस्तदीयाङ्गन-
व्योम्नि व्योम तदीयवर्त्मनि धरा तत्तालवृन्तेऽनिलः ॥

As for the soul inhabiting the body, it can never remain apart from the blessed feet of the Lord. It will find a cosy corner in the heart of the Beloved. This is a small illustration of the 'passion' residing in the heart of a devotee. Now, let us proceed to analyse his 'anger'.

On a particular day, Śrī Rādhā got angry with Śrī Kṛṣṇa owing to some mischievous pranks played by Him. When Her friends came to pacify Her, She burst out in anger: "Pray do not mention His Name before Me; to say nothing of Him, I shall spurn everything possessing a dark hue. I would rather suffer the pangs of separation from Him all My life, but I shall never meet him again:-

"I shall never meet Him, so long as I live;
I would rather suffer the pangs of separation, and would allow to be consumed by the fire of anguish;
I have resolved in my mind that I shall never go to the way frequented by Him.
I shall never apply collyrium to my eyes, nor shall I allow musk to touch my body.

> I shall not hear the music of the bee
> or the cuckoo, nor shall I touch the
> blue lotus with my hand."*

Let the reader mark carefully the amount of Love concealed behind this anger!

On another occasion, in order to enjoy the loving anger of His devoted playmates, the playful Lord wilfully played a foul game with them and thus made them angry. The friends thereupon decided to boycott their naughty companion. None of them, however, was actually prepared to bear His separation even for a moment; for He was the very breath of their life. But making a show of anger they said: "Kṛṣṇa, You Yourself violate the rules of the game and then turn round and grow stiff in anger. Therefore, walk out from here, we shall no longer allow You to play with us". The moment He got this rebuff Śrī Kṛṣṇa came round and assumed a conciliatory attitude. He knelt down before the playmates, asked their forgiveness and swore not to offend them again. The great Hindi poet and saint, Sūradās, has sung as below:-

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* मिलौं न तिनसों भूल, अब जौलौं जीवन जियौं ।
सहौं बिरहको सूल, बरु ताकी ज्वाला जरौं ॥
मैं अब अपने मन यह ठानी । उनके पंथ पिऊँ नहिं पानी ॥
कबहूँ नैन न अंजन लाऊँ । मृगमद भूलि न अंग चढ़ाऊँ ॥
सुनौं न स्रवननि अलि पिक बानी । नील जलज परसौं नहिं पानी ॥

> "In game there is no consideration of Lord and servant.
> Hari (Śrī Kṛṣṇa) has lost the game and victory has gone to Śridāmā; why, then, should You refuse to own Your defeat?
> You are superior to us neither in birth, nor in social rank; nor do we live under Your roof !
> You lord it over us simply because You possess a few more cows than we.
> We shall play no more with a quarrelsome fellow,
> (Hearing this) the Lord would express profuse regrets and kneel down before them.
> The Lord, says Sūradas, would not forego the game; He therefore swore by Nanda (His father) and paid the wager."*

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* खेलनमें को काको गुसैयाँ ।
हरि हारे जीते श्रीदामा, बरबस ही कत करत रुसैयाँ ॥
जाति पाँति हमते बड़ नाहीं, ना हम बसत तुम्हारी छैयाँ ।
अति अधिकार जनावत ताते, जाते अधिक तुम्हारे गैयाँ ॥
रूठ करे ता सँग को खेलै, हा हा खात परत तब पैयाँ ।
'सूरदास' प्रभु खेल्यो ही चाहैं, दाँव दियो करि नंद दुहैयाँ ॥

This is a specimen of the devotee's anger:

Now remains the question of pride. Anent this, it may be said that a wounded sense of innocent pride is an embellishment of God-Love. Once upon a time Śrī Rādhā got displeased with Śrī Kṛṣṇa and assumed an attitude of stiffness towards Him. Addressing Her companions She said:-

"O friends, let not the Darling of Nanda
(Śrī Kṛṣṇa) be admitted to My presence;
However much He may coax you, allow
Him not to enter My portals.
How can people who indulge in
hypocrisy like Him be trusted?
Barring My dwelling, says 'Nārāyaṇa',
let Him go wherever He pleases."*

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* सखि नँदलाल न आवन पावैं ।
भीतर चरन धरन जिन दीजो, चाहे जिते ललचावैं ॥
ऐसनको बिस्वास कहा री कपट बैन बतियावैं ।
'नारायन' इक मेरे भवन तजि अनत चहे जहँ जावैं ॥

The Lord strained every nerve to placate Her anger, but to no purpose. At last He said:-

"O Rādhikā, hear, the amount of strain
imposed upon Me by this anger of Yours
I had not to bear even on occasions as follows:
Uplifting the earth (from under water),
I rescued Brahmā and the Vedas and
slew a formidable foe like the demon Madhu,
Vesting the kingdom of earth in the
hands of the Brāhmans, I relieved
humanity of their terrible suffering
and deprived Bali of his kingdom.
Breaking the bow, I won the hand of
Sīta and conquered the invincible Rāvaṇa.
Crushing demons like Agha, Baka,
Vatsa, Ariṣṭa and Keśī, I swallowed
up the conflagration.
Assuming the form of charming lady
I enchanted gods as well as the demons
and there was none in the world who
did not yield to My charms.
In order to restore the dead child of
my preceptor, I searched the deep ocean,
I know not what is there in this joy
which makes it ever new!
Says 'Sūraśyāma' in My efforts to

conciliate You, I have forgotten all
My strength."*

Blessed is this wounded sense of pride! The Lord performed many a miraculous deed, but nowhere did He find His efforts thwarted like this, never did He feel exhausted. But on this occasion He was powerless in reconciling Sri Radha to Him. This is the game of Love between the Lord and His devotees - in this sport there is attachment, passion, anger, pride and what not; but they are all in a changed form. They are all expressions of the purest form of Love. At this stage, the renunciation of Dharma becomes the supreme Dharma. Absence of all rules is the highest rule of Love.

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* इतो श्रम नाहिंन तबहुँ भयो ।
सुनु राधिका ! जितो श्रम मोकौं ते यह मानु दयो ॥
धरनीधर बिधि बेद उधारो, मधु सो सत्रु हयो ।
द्विज नृप किये दुसह दुख मेटे, बलिको राज लयो ॥
तोर्‍यो धनुष सुयंबर कीनो, रावन अजित जयो ।
अघ बक बच्छ अरिष्ट केसि मथि दावानल अँचयो ॥
तिय बपु धर्‍यो असुर सुर मोहे, को जग जो न द्रयो ।
गुरुसुत मृतक ज्यायबे कारन सागर सोध लयो ॥
जानौं नाहिं कहा या रसमें सहजहि होत नयो ।
'सूरस्याम' बल तोहि मनावत मोहि सब बिसरि गयो ॥

This, however, refers to devotees who have attained perfection in the path of Love. But even during the stage of Sādhanā or practice, if an individual is ever troubled by lust, anger, greed, etc., he should apply them all to God. Sentiments which stand as hindrances in the path of spiritual progress are transformed into helps when directed towards God. This should always be definitely borne in mind.

In the Śrīmad Bhāgavata, we find the following utterance of Śukadeva, the prince of ascetics:-

कामं क्रोधं भयं स्नेहमैक्यं सौहृदमेव च ।
नित्यं हरौ विदधतो यान्ति तन्मयतां हि ते ॥

(X. xxix. 15)

> "He who directs passion, anger, fear, affection, feeling of identity, and friendship towards God is bound to attain absorption in Him."

Intense passion is roused only for an object which is superior to all in every respect, which embodies all glory, supreme sweetness, perfect beauty, and infinite Bliss. All this is present in God. Realizing this, let the practicant be constantly oppressed by the sole desire of meeting Śrī Kṛṣṇa, and let this passion grow from more to more in his heart. Let him ventilate his anger towards Śrī Kṛṣṇa in the following endearing terms: "You are, indeed, very hard-hearted and cruel. You do not appear before me even though I have been imploring You for such a length of time! But remember, it is my turn now to beseech You and (if You do not listen to my importunities) You will have to follow my foot-steps later on." Engaged in the thoughts of God all the twenty-four hours, let him assume an attitude of stiffness towards Him and address Him thus: "Inasmuch as I possess an inexhaustible fund of God-remembrance to draw upon; I am not particularly anxious to meet You. You may Yourself come to me if and when You feel the necessity of meeting me." So on and so forth.

Another beautiful illustration of how passion, anger, and pride, etc., may be directed towards God, is found in the case of the infant solely depending on its mother. Offer the child costly jewels, give it dainty dishes to eat, show it great consideration and regard, sing paeans of praise to it, hold out before it the promise of Heaven or salvation; but the child would seek nothing but its mother and the suck given by her. How can the child desire anything else when it has no knowledge of it. The only object of its knowledge and desire is its mother. It can never be satisfied with anything given in exchange for the mother. Even so, the devotee should crave for nothing but God. God alone should be the object of his craving.

When the child has somewhat grown and begins to toddle, it stumbles and falls. It begins to cry. Hearing the cry the mother runs to help it. But the child gets angry with the mother: although it stumbled and suffered the fall itself, the mother becomes the object of its displeasure. Repeatedly it stammers out - "Why did you leave me alone and go elsewhere?" Now it assumes an attitude of stiffness towards the mother through a wounded sense of pride and says: "I shall no more talk with you, nor shall I ever sit on your lap." The mother tries to appease its anger by taking the child in her arms and giving it a suck. But the child evades her grip and runs weeping before her. Why does it do so? It does so because it recognizes its claim over the mother. It knows the mother to be everything to it. If it is hungry, the fault lies with the mother; if it stumbles and falls, the fault is the mother's; if it is unable to sleep the mother is at fault, and the punishment for this fault is displeasure, anger and an attitude of stiffness towards her. The devotee who solely depends on God can likewise make Him the object of his passion, anger and pride.

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THE GLORY OF DEVOTEES IN THE PATH OF LOVE

त्रिरूपभङ्गपूर्वकं नित्यदासनित्यकान्ताभजनात्मकं वा प्रेमैव कार्यम्, प्रेमैव कार्यम् ॥६६॥

66. DISSOLVING THE TRIPLE CONSCIOUSNESS (VIZ., WORSHIPPER, THE OBJECT OF WORSHIP AND THE ACT OF WORSHIP) LOVE ALONE SHOULD BE CULTIVATED, - LOVE ALONE IN THE FORM OF INCESSANT SERVICE OF THE LORD, OR INCESSANT WIFELY DEVOTION TO THE LORD.

Dissolving the triple consciousness in the shape of the worshipper, the object of worship and the act of worship or the Lover, the Beloved and the act of loving, Love alone should be offered to the Lord in the form of incessant service or incessant wifely devotion. Both in the attitude of a worshipper of servitor (Dāsyabhāva) and wifely devotion (Kāntābhāva) complete unity is attained with the Lord in due course. To offer one's all, including body, mind and speech, to the Lord in an absolutely disinterested spirit and to cognize none in this world except the Lord, - such is the ideal of a servitor of the Lord. And to look upon the husband as one's all - body, mind, wealth, goal, intellect, support, life, virtue, salvation, nay, as God Himself, - to recognize no male person in this world but the busband, and to regard the husband's property as one's own property, the husband's body as one's own body, the husband's mind as one's own mind, the husband's service as one's own service, the husband's authority as one's own authority, the husband's honour as one's own honour, the husband's dishonour as one's own dishonour and the husband's life as one's own life, and in this way to depend solely on one's husband and dedicate one's life to him and to keep oneself constantly and exclusively engaged in his service in a perfectly disinterested spirit, - such is the ideal of wifely devotion. In essence, both these attitudes or types of Devotion are one. There is the spirit of equality in both. There is identity in both. Even in the practice of Devotion through service, a servitor forgets his all and accepts the name and family of the Lord as his own. Whereas wifely devotion is attained only when one identifies oneself with the name and family of the husband. The following are the sentiments of Goswāmī Tulasīdās in regard to Dāsyabhāva, the attitude of the servitor in Devotion:-

"I belong to no particular caste or
community, nor have I anything to do
with another's caste or community;
No one is of any use to me, nor am
I of any use to anyone.
My welfare in this world as well as

the next lies in the hands of the Lord of Raghus;
The name is the only mainstay of Tulasī.
People are utterly ignorant, they know not the truth -
The slave is known by the name of the master.
Whether I am a saint or a sinner, good or bad, I need not worry about;
Do I beg at any one's door?
Whoever I am, I am Śrī Rāma's."*

Thus the slave identifies himself with the name and family of his master. Singing the glory of Dāsyabhāva Śrī Rādhā addresses Uddhava thus:-

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*

मेरे जातिपाँति न चहौं काहूकी जातिपाँति,
मेरे कोऊ कामको न हौं काहूके कामको ।
लोक परलोक रघुनाथहीके हाथ सब,
भारी है भरोसो तुलसीके एक नामको ॥
अति ही अयाने उपखाने नहीं बूझैं लोग,
साहहीको गोत गोत होत है गुलामको ।
साधु कै असाधु, कै भलो कै पोच, सोच कहा,
का काहूके द्वार परौं जो हौं सो हौं रामको ॥

> "Devotion to Śrī Kṛṣṇa and service of Śrī Kṛṣṇa is the highest of all boons. Supreme Devotion to Śrī Hari is even superior to the five types of Mukti (Liberation).* Service of Śrī Hari is more difficult to obtain than the position of Brahmā (Creator), residence in heaven, the position of Indra (the Lord of Paradise), immortality, a drink of nectar and even perfection (the highest bliss or Salvation)."§

In wifely sentiment, of course, there is perfect self-identification with the Lord. Dādū, the great medieval saint of Rājpūtānā, says:-

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* The five types of Mukti are: (1) Sālokya (residence in the abode of Śrī Hari), (2) Sāmīpya (living in close proximity to the Lord), (3) Sārṣṭi (enjoying the same powers as the Lord), (4) Sārūpya (having a similar form to that of Śrī Hari) and (5) Sāyujya (absolute identity with the Lord).

§ कृष्णभक्तिः कृष्णदास्यं वरेषु च वरं वरम् ।
श्रेष्ठा पञ्चविधामुक्तेर्हरिभक्तिर्गरीयसी ॥
ब्रह्मत्वादपि देवत्वादिन्द्रत्वादमरादपि ।
अमृतात् सिद्धिलाभाच्च हरिदास्यं सुदुर्लभम् ॥

(Brahmavaivarta-Purāṇa, Kṛṣṇa-Khaṇḍa, 97. 8-9)

> "Love of my beloved Lord is lodged in the heart;
> Every hair on my body is, therefore,
> resounding with the sound of "Dear Lord!" "Dear Lord!"
> I would fain address a letter to my
> Beloved, if He were abroad; what
> message shall I send Him who dwells in my body, mind and eyes?"*

The wife and husband are blended in inseparable union with each other and become one, - so that the triple consciousness is automatically dissolved in their case. The author advises us to place this idea of absolute identity before us, to bear this idea in mind, and offer our Love to God either through service (Dāsyabhāva) or through the practice of the wifely sentiment (Kāntābhāva).

भक्ता एकान्तिनो मुख्याः ॥६७॥

67. DEVOTEES WHO ARE EXCLUSIVELY ATTACHED TO THE LORD ARE THE BEST.

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* प्रीति जो मेरे पीवकी बैठी पिंजर माहिं ।
रोम रोम पिउ पिउ करै, 'दादुर' दूसर नाहिं ॥
प्रीतमको पतियाँ लिखूँ, जो कहुँ होय बिदेस ।
तनमें, मनमें, नैनमें, ताको कहा सँदेस ॥

A devotee of the Lord, who practises single-minded Devotion according to the foregoing aphorism, is the best of all. For his body, mind and all earthly possessions become the property of God. He lives in the world as an instrument of God. His soul is merged in the Oversoul, his mind is absorbed in the mind of God, his eyes behold always everywhere the image of his beloved Lord. The poet says:-

> "The image of the Beloved has settled
> in the eyes: how can any other object
> enter them?
> The wayfarer, says Rahīm, will himself
> go back when he finds the rest-house
> packed to the full.*

Kabīr also says:-

> "It is no longer possible, says Kabīr,
> even to apply collyrium.
> The Beloved has settled in the eyes;
> how can any different person enter
> them?

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* प्रीतम छबि नैनन बसी, पर छबि कहाँ समाय।
भरी सराय 'रहीम' लखि, आप पथिक फिरि जाय॥

I have none to count upon during the
eight watches and twentyfour hours of
the live-long day.
Thou alone dwellest in the eyes: even
sleep has no access there."*

कण्ठावरोधरोमाञ्चाश्रुभिः परस्परं लपमानाः
पावयन्ति कुलानि पृथिवीं च ॥ ६८ ॥

68. DEVOTEES OF THIS TYPE CONVERSING WITH EACH OTHER WITH A VOICE CHOKED WITH EMOTION, HAIRS ON THE BODY BRISTLING WITH JOY AND EYES WET WITH TEARS, SANCTIFY NOT ONLY THEIR FAMILIES BUT THE WHOLE EARTH.

When devotees of the type mentioned above meet and talk about their beloved Lord, who is their very life-breath, as it were, their heart begins to overflow with Love. Their voice gets choked with emotion, they cannot speak even if they try to do so. The hair on their body stands erect; rays of Love shoot out from every pore of their body and radiate the spotless lustre of Love. The whole atmosphere of that place gets purified and surcharged with currents of Divine Love. Such devotees forget their very self in the height of emotion; they shed tears of Love and are immersed in supreme Bliss. Such a state is very rare and highly sublime and pure. It goes without saying that the whole family or the blessed devotee, who has reached this state, is sanctified. Says Goswāmī Tulasīdās:-

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* 'कबिरा' काजर-रेखहू, अब तो दई न जाय ।
नैननि पीतम रमि रहा, दूजा कहाँ समाय ॥
आठ पहर चौंसठ घरी, मेरे और न कोय ।
नैना माहीं तू बसै, नींदहिं ठौर न होय ॥

> "The family in which an humble devotee of the Lord of Raghus (Śrī Rāma) is born is, indeed, blessed, holy and worthy of adoration by the whole world."*

Nay, the whole earth is sanctified by their very presence. Even the man, who comes in contact with the air touched by the body of such a loving devotee, is sanctified. The scripture says:-

> "Holy is the family and blessed the mother, nay, the earth itself is fortunate through him whose mind is

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* सो कुल धन्य उमा सुनु जगत पूज्य सुपुनीत।
श्रीरघुबीर परायन जेहिं नर उपज बिनीत॥

> absorbed in the supreme Brahma, the ocean of infinite Knowledge and Bliss."*

The Lord Himself says in the *Śrīmad Bhāgavata*:-

> "The devotee whose voice is choked with emotion, whose heart melts out of Love, who sobs again and again, and at times begins to laugh, and shaking off bashfulness begins to sing loudly and dance, sanctifies the whole world."§

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* कुलं पवित्रं जननी कृतार्था
वसुन्धरा पुण्यवती च तेन ।
अपारसंवित्सुखसागरेऽस्मिँ-
ल्लीनं परे ब्रह्मणि यस्य चेतः ॥

§ वाग्गद्गदा द्रवते यस्य चित्तं
रुदत्यभीक्ष्णं हसति क्वचिच्च ।
विलज्ज उद्गायति नृत्यते च
मद्भक्तियुक्तो भुवनं पुनाति ॥

(XI. xiv. 24)

तीर्थीकुर्वन्ति तीर्थानि सुकर्मीकुर्वन्ति कर्माणि
सच्छास्त्रीकुर्वन्ति शास्त्राणि ॥ ६९ ॥

69. SUCH DEVOTEES ENHANCE THE SANCTITY OF SACRED PLACES, ADD GLORY TO ACTIONS AND LEND AUTHORITY TO THE SCRIPTURES.

Sacred places and rivers, etc., rid such persons of their sins, who resort to them, and purify such persons, but they are defiled in their turn by the constant contact of sinful men and women, who visit them. This contamination brought by the pilgrims is removed by the contact of holy men. Goddess Gangā, the presiding deity of the Ganges, propitiated by the austere penance of king Bhagīratha, son of Dilīpa, appearing in person in order to bless him, said, 'How can I descend of earth? All the sinners of the world will wash their sins and purify themselves by immersing their sinful bodies in my sacred waters, but where shall I wash the immense store of sins they will deposit in my watery body? Have you thought over this question?"

Bhagīratha gave the following memorable reply on this occasion:-

> "When holy men, who have renounced worldly pleasures and attained tranquility of mind, who are established in Brahma, and whose very existence purifies the world, will bathe in your waters, the very contact of their bodies will purge you of your sins; for Śrī Hari, the dispeller of sins, resides in their heart."*

The Prachetās, extolling the Lord, said:-

> "The contact of Thy devotees, who move about in the world only to sanctify the sacred places, cannot but be welcome to him who is afraid of transmigration."§

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* साधवो न्यासिनः शान्ता
ब्रह्मिष्ठा लोकपावनाः ।
हरन्त्यघं तेऽङ्गसङ्गात्
तेष्वास्ते ह्यघभिद्धरिः ॥

(Śrīmad Bhāgavata IX. ix. 6)

§ तेषां विचरतां पद्भ्यां तीर्थानां पावनेच्छया ।
भीतस्य किं न रोचेत तावकानां समागमः ॥

(Śrīmad Bhāgavata IX. xxv. 37)

King Yudhiṣṭhira, addressing the great devotee Vidura, says:-

> "Devotees of your type, who are embodiments of sanctity, themselves revive the sanctity of sacred places (defiled by the contact of sinners) through the presence in their heart of the wielder of Mace (Śrī Hari).*

Even so whatever actions are enjoined by the Śāstras, and are performed by such devotees, are recognised as good and commendable, and those scriptures alone, which are recognized by them, are held as authoritative. Nay, it will be no exaggeration to say that the place where a devotee lives, and the lake or stream in which he bathes, acquire the sanctity of Tirthas. Whatever a devotee does is recognized as the standard of morality, and whatever he preaches acquires the dignity of a scripture. The place of his residence is a holy place, his actions are ideal actions and his utterances command the authority of a scripture. This becomes clear when we understand the meaning of a holy place, a noble action and a holy book.

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* भवद्विधा भागवतास्तीर्थभूताः स्वयं विभो ।
तीर्थीकुर्वन्ति तीर्थानि स्वान्तःस्थेन गदाभृता ॥

(Śrīmad Bhāgavata I. xiii. 10)

तन्मयाः ॥७०॥

70. (FOR) THEY ARE ONE WITH HIM.

Just as a river falling into the ocean becomes one with the ocean, even so the devotee, having surrendered his body, mind, intellect, ego and everything else at the feet of his beloved Lord, becomes one with Him. Such a devotee becomes the very image of the Lord; the whole atmosphere - gross as well as subtle of the place where he lives, gets purified. It is, therefore, that even holy places, virtuous actions and holy books are rendered holier by the contact of such a devotee. It is through devotees of this type that the glory of God, His Name and the practice of Devotion to Him are enhanced, and the vilest sinner coming in contact with them easily crosses the terrible ocean of worldly existence.

मोदन्ते पितरो नृत्यन्ति देवताः सनाथा चेयं भूर्भवति ॥७१॥

71. ON THE ADVENT OF A DEVOTEE, HIS ANCESTORS (IN THE OTHER WORLD) REJOICE, CELESTIAL BEINGS BEGIN TO DANCE (OUT OF JOY) AND THE EARTH IS ENDOWED WITH A PROTECTOR.

The advent of a devotee is a happy augury for all; for all his activities are naturally conducive to the welfare of the world. His very existence fosters respect for Dharma among the people and engenders faith in the worship of the manes and gods. The result is that those who have strayed from the path of Dharma resume the same and revert to religious practices and observances such as Yajña (sacrifice), charity, Śrāddha (offering of food to the manes), Tarpaṇa (offering oblations of water to gods, Ṛṣis and the manes), etc., which prove a source of immense gratification to the gods and the manes. The Devotion of a Bhakta redeems a number of generations going before and coming after him, so that on the advent of a devotee in their line the manes rejoice over the immediate and sure prospect of liberation. The Padmapurāṇa says:-

> "On the advent of a devotee in their line the manes begin to dance and slap their arms out of joy in the hope that he will bring salvation to them."*

Devotees who are mad after obtaining a vision of the Lord cannot be satisfied with anything short of it; and the Lord who is all-truth, all-consciousness and all-bliss appears before him in His Divine form in order to pacify and appease him by embracing and caressing him like a fond mother. Simultaneously with His appearance the process of destruction of the Asuras, the enemies of the gods, starts. Thus the gods also begin to dance, knowing the advent of a Bhakta to be the precursor of the manifestation of the Lord. Mother Earth remains unprotected so long as the Lord Himself, or His beloved devotees, do not appear in the world. On the advent of a devotee, the Lord follows him like the cow fondly running after its newborn calf. That is how the earth is endowed with a protector with the very appearance of a devotee.

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* आस्फोटयन्ति पितरो नृत्यन्ति च पितामहाः ।
मद्वंशे वैष्णवो जातः स नस्त्राता भविष्यति ॥

नास्ति तेषु जातिविद्यारूपकुलधनक्रियादि-
भेदः ॥ ७२ ॥

72. AMONG THEM (THE DEVOTEES) THERE IS NO DISTINCTION DUE TO CASTE, LEARNING, EXTERNAL APPEARANCE, BIRTH, POSSESSIONS, OCCUPATION, ETC.

The author here tries to bring home the fact that in the practice of Devotion caste, learning, physical appearance, birth, possessions, occupation, etc. do not matter. He alone succeeds in securing the rare boon of Devotion, who has deducated his all at the feet of the Lord and keeps his mind constantly absorbed in loving remembrance of Śrī Hari - no matter whether he is a Brāhmaṇ or a Śūdra (labourer), educated or uneducated, good-looking or ugly, high-born or low-born, wealthy or destitute, active or inactive. Niṣāda was born in a low caste, Sadan was a butcher by birth and profession, Śabarī was a rustic woman, Dhruva was an untutored boy, Bibhīṣaṇa, Hanumān and others were ugly-looking and low-born Rākṣasas and monkeys, Vidura and Sudāmā were paupers, and the milkmaids of Brindāban were initiated into the secrets of Vedic rites; but all these attained the Love of God by dint of their Devotion and self-surrender and became great favourites of the Lord. He alone is a devotee, he alone is accomplished in every way, in whose heart resides Bhakti, the fruit of all noble actions, no matter who he is. Goswāmī Tulasīdās says the same thing in his Rāmacharitamānasa:-

> "He alone is all-knowing and accomplished; he alone is a bestower of gifts and he alone is an ornament of the earth, learned and wise; he alone is pious and he alone is a saviour of his line, whose mind is attached to the feet of Śrī Rāma. He alone is prudent and sanest of men, he it is who has correctly understood the teachings of the Vedas;

> he alone is a man of knowledge and he alone is daring, who adores Śrī Rāma with a sincere heart."*

The Lord of Raghus (Śrī Rāma) says to Śabari:-

> "I recognize the kinship of Devotion alone. A person lacking in Devotion, is no better than a cloud devoid of moisture, despite superior caste, noble descent, high rank, piety, respectable position, untold riches herculean strength, a large number of dependants and rare accomplishments and ability."§

This does not mean that a devotee recognizes himself to be superior to all and accomplished in every way and accepts the adoration of all or claims equality of status during social dinner, or in matters connected with marriage, social dealings, standard of living, mode of conduct and family tradition, etc., with those who are superior to him in social rank, caste, order or stage in life. Nay, a devotee shakes off pride altogether, why should he impose upon himself a new character which may prove an additional source of vanity to him? He who does so is surely no Bhakta. Bhakti and observance of the rules of Varṇāśrama are two separate things; they should not be confounded. Those who seek to abolish the distinction between them in the name of Bhakti bring a slur on Bhakti. Hence practicants in the path of Bhakti should never think of repudiating the authority of the Śāstras. It is true that wealth and learning cannot be acquired unless one earns them by virtue of his past Karma, nor is it possible to change one's appearance, caste or lineage in this life. But the presence or absence of these qualifications, or their abundance and inadequacy, should not lead us to form a high or low opinion about a Bhakta. A Bhakta should not be looked down upon the ground of birth, etc., and should be judged by his Bhakti alone. That is why in the Vaiṣṇava scriptures discrimination among Bhaktas on grounds of caste, etc., has been declared an offence.*

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* सोइ सर्बग्य गुनी सोइ ग्याता । सोइ महि मंडित पंडित दाता ॥
धर्म परायन सोइ कुल त्राता । राम चरन जाकर मन राता ॥
नीति निपुन सोइ परम सयाना । श्रुति सिद्धांत नीक तेहिं जाना ॥
सोइ कबि कोबिद सोइ रनधीरा । जो छल छाड़ि भजइ रघुबीरा ॥

§ कह रघुपति सुनु भामिनि बाता । मानउँ एक भगति कर नाता ॥
जाति पाँति कुल धर्म बड़ाई । धन बल परिजन गुन चतुराई ॥
भगति हीन नर सोहइ कैसा । बिनु जल बारिद देखिअ जैसा ॥

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* In the Vaiṣṇava scriptures sixty-four offences have been enumerated. Avoidance of

यतस्तदीयाः ॥ ७३ ॥

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these offences is calculated to prove highly beneficial. They are: (1) to regard God as only a deity or a principle, (2) to look upon the Vedas as a book written by an author or authors, (3) to discriminate between Bhaktas on the ground of caste, (4) to look upon one's preceptor as an ordinary human being, (5) to regard an image or picture of God as wood, stone, metal, paper or clay, (6) to treat Prasāda (food offered to the Lord) as ordinary food, (7) to treat Charaṇāmṛta (water in which the sacred feet of an image of God have been washed) as ordinary water, (8) to regard Tulasī (the basil plant) as an ordinary plant, (9) to regard the cow as an ordinary beast, (10) to regard the Gītā and the Bhāgavata as ordinary books, (11) to regard the Divine sports as human activities, (12) to compare the sports of the Lord with earthly love or sex-pleasure, (13) to regard the Gopīs as others' wives (in relation to the Lord), (14) to regard the Rāsa dance of Śrī Kṛṣṇa as an amorous sports, (15) to discriminate (between touchables and untouchables) in festivities connected with the Lord, (16) disbelief in God and the Śāstras, (17) to practise Dharma with a doubting mind, (18) to be slothful in discharging one's religious duties, (19) to

73. FOR THE DEVOTEES ARE ALL HIS.

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judge devotees by external things, (20) to comment on the merits and demerits of saints, (21) to have a high opinion about one's own self, (22) to revile a particular god or scripture, (23) to turn one's back on an image of God, (24) to approach an image of God with shoes on, (25) to wear a garland in the presence of an image of God, (26) to approach an image of God stick in hand, (27) to approach an image of God in a blue garment, (28) to approach an image of God without washing one's mouth and cleaning one's teeth, (29) to enter a temple of God without changing one's cloths after evacuation of bowels or sexual intercourse, (30) to stretch one's arms or legs before an image of God, (31) to chew betel-leaves before an image of God, (32) to laugh loudly before an image of God, (33) to make undesirable gestures, (34) to hover about women, (35) to lose one's temper, (36) to salute anyone in the presence of an image of God, (37) to visit a temple immediately after eating something which gives a foul odour, (38) to take an intoxicating drug or liquor, (39) to insult or assault anyone, (40) to make gestures expressive of lust or anger, (41) to fail in one's duty to a stranger or a holy man, (42) to regard oneself as a devotee, a pious soul, a learned man or a virtuous person, By dint of their Devotion, all devotees become in effect embodiments of the Divine, (43) to associate with unbelievers, profligates, sanguinary persons, greedy men and liars, (44) to blame God in adversity, (45) to practise virtue with a sinful motive, (46) to regard oneself as pious even though oppressing anyone even slightly, (47) to refuse to maintain one's wife, children, family, dependants, the needy, and holy men, (48) to offer something to God treating it as enjoyable later by oneself, or to enjoy it without first offering it to God, (49) to swear by the name of one's chosen deity, (50) to sell Dharma and the Name of God, (51) to expect anything from anyone but one's chosen deity, (52) to violate the injunctions of the Sastras, (53) to behave as a knower of Brahma, even though lacking such knowledge, (54) to discriminate between Vaisnavas belonging to different sects, (55) to behave as a God, (56) to revile particular Avatāras by discriminating between Lilas, (57) to call anyone as God even in jest, (58) to believe God to be dependent on anyone, (59) to offer Prasāda or Charaṇāmṛta of the Lord to a person out of monetary consideration, (60) to insult a picture, image or Name of God, (61) to oppress, intimidate or wrong anyone, (62) to renounce faith on failure in a controversy, (63) to regard the birth and activities of the various Avatāras as commonplace and (64) to regard the two forms of the Deity, such as Śrī Rādhā and Śrī Kṛṣṇa, as separate.

so they lose all sense of difference among themselves and none of them arrogates to himself a superior position with respect to others.

* * *

CONTROVERSIAL DISCUSSION IS A GREAT HINDRANCE

वादो नावलम्ब्यः ॥ ७४ ॥

74. THE DEVOTEE SHOULD NEVER ENTER INTO A CONTROVERSY.

The above aphorism is extremely valuable to a practicant in the path of Devotion. There is absolutely no need for the devotee to enter into any argumentation or controversy. He should know that every moment of his life stands dedicated to the remembrance of his beloved Lord, so he has no right to devote it to any other activity. Besides, what should he argue or reason about? When was the world created how it was created, why it was created, and what is the root principle underlying creation? - all these things he need not know. Knowing and believing God as the be-all and end-all of life, he has made God his exclusive goal. God Himself will reveal His truth to the devotee whenever He wills. When will God reveal His truth, and whether at all He will reveal it - these thoughts, too, should be not agitate the mind of the devotee. There should be no room in his mind for entertaining any thought other than the thought of His beloved Lord. And it is as certain as anything that Truth can never be realized by logic. That is why the Brahma-Sūtras lay down that 'logical reasoning has no foundation or stability' 'तर्काप्रतिष्ठानात्' (11.i.11). The Kathopanisad says: 'नैषा तर्केण मतिरापनेया' (1.ii.9) 'that Truth cannot be realized by intellectual reasoning'. Truth or Reality is automatically revealed to an individual of pure heart having the Sattva element predominant in him. The maxim 'वादे वादे जायते तत्त्वबोधः' (Truth is known through argument and reasoning) is also partially true; but here the word 'Vāda' (reasoning) has a different connotation. A devout disciple places his arguments before the preceptor actuated by a spirit of enquiry, and the preceptor on his part advances counter-arguments in order to dispel the disciple's doubts and bring home the real truth to him. This kind of reasoning is not harmful. But the reasoning which starts with certain pre-conceptions is invariably attended with harmful results. And controversy invariably tends to make one partial to his own views. The goal of arriving at Truth is eventually lost sight of and one gradually develops the tendency of catching at the weak points of his adversary and indulging in personal recrimination culminating in mutual vilification and use of abusive language with reference to each other. The sense of discrimination is lost, the spirit of anger prevails, speech gets out of control and deep-seated bitterness ensues between the two parties. Therefore it is said: 'वादे वादे वर्द्धते वैरवह्निः' - (The fire of animosity blazes up through controversial reasoning). The wayfarer in the path of Devotion should find no time to enter into a controversy. As far as possible he should keep away from places where such disputations are held. If ever through a decree of Providence, he should fall in with controversialists of this type, he should assume an attitude of humility towards them and give a patient hearing to them and should never prolong the discussion by attempting a reply. ' अतृणे पतितो वह्निः स्वयमेवोपशाम्यति ' goes the Sanskrit proverb. 'When no fuel is added to the fire it will automatically go out.' The disputant will be automatically silenced if he is given no answer. Therefore, the best course for the devotee is to keep mum. He should constantly remember the saying 'मौनं सर्वार्थसाधनम्' (all objects are achieved through observance of silence). Let him not hear any word which may create doubt in his mind in regard to his faith, the object of his worship, the path he has chalked out for himself, the course of discipline he is following; neither should he himself utter a word which may wound another's feeling. When unavoidable, let him only hear what others say, but let him not in any case enter into argument for the sake of argument, or for vanquishing others, or for establishing his point over the point of another. This does not mean that he should refuse to speak even to an earnest seeker after truth, or to tender advice to friends when called for. The intention of the aphorism is that he should never enter into argument. Let him not speak where it is unnecessary to speak; and when it becomes unavoidable, let him speak only to the extent it is absolutely necessary. Let there be no exaggeration in his speech; no spirit of wrangling or opposition to another; let him not cut jokes with another, let him not expose the faults of another; let him not hurt the feelings of another; let him not indulge in self-praise or extol his own views; let him not say unpleasant thing to, or speak ill of, another; let him not speak with the motive of some gain; let him not mislead another through his words, nor create in the mind of another doubt about his (latter's) faith. Let him speak only such words as are true, sweet, palatable and salutary and cause no annoyance to another; the rest of his time he should devote exclusively to the remembrance of the Divine Name. Let him regard the utterance of a single superfluous word as a great loss, inasmuch as the time spent over it is wasted. The practice of Nāma-Japa is disturbed during that interval, apart from the harmful influence exerted on the atmosphere by useless words. Let him know it for certain that Divine Love, Divine Knowledge or God-Realization can never be attained by indulgence in argumentation, or controversial reasoning. On the contrary, controversy leads to evils like egoism, hatred, anger, malice and violence. Therefore, the practicant should always keep himself aloof from controversial discussion. Goswāmī Tulasīdās says:-

> "So thinking, the wise and the dispassionate betake themselves to Śrī Rāma, renouncing all speculative reasoning.
>
> "O thou of steadfast intellect, knowing this, give up all sophistical reasoning and doubt; betake thy self to Śrī Rāma, the valiant hero, the repository of compassion, the embodiment of Beauty and the bestower of Bliss."*

बाहुल्यावकाशादनियतत्वाच्च ॥ ७५ ॥

75. BECAUSE (IN ARGUMENTATION) THERE IS ROOM FOR EXCESS, AND BECAUSE IT CANNOT DETERMINE ANYTHING.

Giving reasons for the above precept the author says that in a controversy a statement is followed by a counter-statement, and the process goes on ad infinitum. In order to maintain their respective position volleys of arguments are discharged from each side. The truth which can be realized only through Divine Grace, can never be realized through argumentative reasoning. Therefore such reasoning leads to no good. In the course of a discussion one party may feel exhausted through continued speaking, or may fail to hit upon a cogent argument on the spur of the moment, thus enabling the other party to score a victory; but this victory does not necessarily lead to Truth; for a conclusion arrived at through this process is never the Truth. Therefore, instead of wasting time over discussions, a devotee should surrender himself completely to God, and practise constant remembrance of Him in a sincere and disinterested spirit. Divine Love is attained not by developing argument, but through the practice of Devotion.

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* अस बिचारि जे तग्य बिरागी ।
रामहि भजहिं तरक सब त्यागी ॥
अस बिचारि मति धीर तजि कुतर्क संसय सकल ।
भजिअ राम रनधीर करुनाकर सुंदर सुखद ॥

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PRINCIPAL AIDS TO DIVINE LOVE

भक्तिशास्त्राणि मननीयानि तदुद्बोधक-
कर्माण्यपि करणीयानि ॥ ७६ ॥

76. (FOR THE ATTAINMENT OF DIVINE LOVE) THE TEACHINGS OF SCRIPTURES PROMOTING DEVOTION SHOULD BE CONSTANTLY MEDITATED UPON AND ACTIONS WHICH MAY INCREASE THE SPIRIT OF DEVOTION SHOULD BE PERFORMED.

It is far from true that the aspirant of Divine Love should neither read any literature, nor perform any action. Without being involved in any controversy, he should certainly repeatedly study books which may place before him the ideals of Devotion, the glories of Devotion and the practices of Devotion; books, which describe the sacred and elevating stories of God's beloved devotees as well as the glory, secret and excellence of God Himself, who being moved by the Love of the devotee makes Himself subservient to the latter. Divine Love manifests itself by the study of such devotional scriptures and through hearing and study of the teachings of saints and great devotees. It is true, the aspirant of Divine Love should neither read nor submit to the reading before him of books which refute God or the efficacy of the practice of devotion, which slight their glories or decry

God's beloved devotees, or which extol the value and glory of ephemeral earthly things. He will not derive profit even from the study of books which do not contain the glories of God, His devotees or the practice of Devotion. Besides, literature which tend to produce strong likes and dislikes, lust and anger, enmity and friction should not even be touched by him. That is why the saying goes:-

यस्मिन् शास्त्रे पुराणे वा हरिभक्तिर्न दृश्यते ।
श्रोतव्यं नैव तच्छास्त्रं यदि ब्रह्मा स्वयं वदेत् ॥

> "The scripture, or the Purāṇa, which does not reveal the glory of Devotion to God, should not be heard when recited, even if Brahma Himself may be the expounder thereof."

In addition, whatever action he may undertake must promote the awakening and advancement of the spirit of Devotion. The aspirant of Divine Love must wholly give up all prohibited action (sin). He who due to attachment to sense-objects does not intend to give up the practice of sin, and yet desires to gain the reputation of a Bhakta (devotee), is either deluded himself, or is deliberately attempting to deceive others.

The following are the principal forms of activity which serve as aids to the attainment of Divine Love:

1. Scrupulous observance of duties prescribed for one's Varṇa and Āśrama. Renunciatory conduct on the part of the Brahmachārī, Vāṇaprasthī and Sannyāsī, and on the part of the Gṛhastha (householder) maintenance of parents, wife, children and other dependants with proper respect and affection in the spirit of earning thereby the pleasure of God, earning of livelihood through truthful and righteous means and performance of sacrifices, charities and austerities, enjoined by the scriptures.

2. Practice of Sadāchāra (right conduct).

3. Attendance in Satsaṅga and hearing and Kīrtana of Divine Glory and meditation on the same.

4. Practice of Japa of the Divine Name, and remembrance and Kīrtana (loud chanting) of the same.

5. Worship of God, prayer and obeisance.

6. Personal service of saints and devotees and carrying out their behests with reverence.

7. Residence in places of pilgrimage.

8. compassion for distressed creatures and their service to the best of one's ability through body, mind and wealth.

9. Offering of all actions to God.

10. The practice of observing God in every creature.

The Lord Himself says:-

"Sincere solicitude for My stories (of sports) which are as blessed as ambrosia, constant chanting of My Names and Glories, complete attachment to My adoration, singing of hymns in My praise, constant attention to My service, salutation before Me with all the eight parts of the body, worship to My devotees with special marks of respect, to observe Me in all beings, to perform all worldly activities only for My sake, to deliberate only on My glories during conversation, to resign the mind to Me, to give up all desires, to renounce wealth, earthly enjoyments and comforts for My sake and to perform sacrifices, charity, offering of oblations, Japa,

> austerities and vows only for My sake: O Uddhava! one may attain Divine Love if he worships Me with these practices through surrender of self. When he attains that, there remains nothing else to be attained by him."*

Again Prabuddha, the chief of Yogīs, described to Mahārājā Nimi, the discipline to be practised for the attainment of Divine Love, as follows:-

> "He who is anxious to secure his highest good should resort to a preceptor

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* श्रद्धामृतकथायां मे शश्वन्मदनुकीर्तनम् ।
परिनिष्ठा च पूजायां स्तुतिभिः स्तवनं मम ॥
आदरः परिचर्यायां सर्वाङ्गैरभिवन्दनम् ।
मद्भक्तपूजाभ्यधिका सर्वभूतेषु मन्मतिः ॥
मदर्थेष्वङ्गचेष्टा च वचसा मद्गुणेरणम् ।
मय्यर्पणं च मनसः सर्वकामविवर्जनम् ॥
मदर्थेऽर्थपरित्यागो भोगस्य च सुखस्य च ।
इष्टं दत्तं हुतं जप्तं मदर्थं यद्व्रतं तपः ॥
एवं धर्मैर्मनुष्याणामुद्धवात्मनिवेदिनाम् ।
मयि सञ्जायते भक्तिः कोऽन्योऽर्थोऽस्यावशिष्यते ॥
(Śrīmad Bhāgavata XI. xix. 20-24)

versed in the Vedas, who has attained complete serenity of mind and has fixed himself on Supreme Brahma. Realizing the preceptor as the Atma and the Deity, he should learn from him through sincere and obedient service, the virtues of Bhāgavatas (votaries of God), by which Hari, the Paramātmā, who gives away Himself (to His devotees), is pleased. He should cultivate non-attachment to every sense-object, but attachment to the association of Sādhus and Mahātmās, and compassion, friendliness and modesty towards other beings (compassion for the low, friendship for equals and modesty towards superiors). He should remain pure in body, mind and in respect of his wealth, and should perform his duties assigned by the Varṇāśrama system as performance of Tapas or austerities, should practise forbearance bearing heat and cold equally, should not waste words on unworthy objects and devote the mind to remembrance of God, study of the Vedas, practice of straightforwardness. Brahmacharya, Ahiṃsa (non-injury to creatures), practice of equanimity in both pain and pleasure. He should learn to see in all beings his own self or God Himself, the

Supreme Being, and live in seclusion, regarding his home as belonging to God. He should dress himself in plain, ordinary clothes and feel satisfied with any food that he may get. He should have faith in the scriptures that deal with Divine Glory, but should not denounce other scriptures, and possess control over his mind, speech and activities, and be truthful, tranquil and self-possessed. He should always listen to, sing of, or contemplate on the wonderful deeds of Śrī Hari, His birth, activities and qualities, and resign to the Supreme Lord his sacrificial activities, gifts, austerities, Japa, good conduct and whatever is beloved of him, his wife, children, house and his very life. Similarly, he should cultivate friendship with devotees whose soul and Lord is God and serve all creatures, mobile and immobile, all human beings and especially among them the righteous and Mahāpuruṣas (great souls who have realized God). He should learn how to sing and expound the glories of God, and to experience delight, self-satisfaction and cessation of misery in the company of devotees. All these he should learn at the feet of the Sadguru (Preceptor). Divine Love grows in the heart of the devotees, who practises the above forms of Devotion as discipline, who remembers and makes others remember Hari, who destroys all sins, whose hairs stand on end in his body and who gets merged in Love."*

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* तस्माद् गुरुं प्रपद्येत जिज्ञासुः श्रेय उत्तमम् ।
शाब्दे परे च निष्णातं ब्रह्मण्युपशमाश्रयम् ॥
तत्र भागवतान् धर्मान् शिक्षेद् गुर्वात्मदैवतः ।
अमाययानुवृत्त्या यैस्तुष्येदात्माऽऽत्मदो हरिः ॥
सर्वतो मनसोऽसङ्गमादौ सङ्गं च साधुषु ।
दयां मैत्रीं प्रश्रयं च भूतेष्वद्धा यथोचितम् ॥
शौचं तपस्तितिक्षां च मौनं स्वाध्यायमार्जवम् ।
ब्रह्मचर्यमहिंसां च समत्वं द्वन्द्वसंज्ञयोः ॥
सर्वत्रात्मेश्वरान्वीक्षां कैवल्यमनिकेतताम् ।
विविक्तचीरवसनं सन्तोषं येन केनचित् ॥
श्रद्धां भागवते शास्त्रेऽनिन्दामन्यत्र चापि हि ।
मनोवाक्कर्मदण्डं च सत्यं शमदमावपि ॥
श्रवणं कीर्तनं ध्यानं हरेरद्भुतकर्मणः ।
जन्मकर्मगुणानां च तदर्थेऽखिलचेष्टितम् ॥
इष्टं दत्तं तपो जप्तं वृत्तं यच्चात्मनः प्रियम् ।
दारान् सुतान् गृहान् प्राणान् यत् परस्मै निवेदनम् ॥
एवं कृष्णात्मनाथेषु मनुष्येषु च सौहृदम् ।
परिचर्यां चोभयत्र महत्सु नृषु साधुषु ॥

Thus, Devotion grows through hearing of the recital or study of devotional scriptures, such as the Bhāgavata, the Gītā, the Rāmāyaṇa, etc., or through attendance in Satsanga, and practice of Japa and Kīrtana of the Divine Name performed in the spirit of cultivating the pleasure of God. The devotee should always strive to be virtuous by nature and should always devote his time in pursuit of noble activities. It is then only that the spirit of Devotion will grow in him.

Describing the marks of His beloved devotees, Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa said in the Gītā:-

> "He who beareth no ill-will to any being, and is friendly and compassionate, who is free from worldly attachment and egoism, who looks upon pleasure and pain alike and is forgiving;

परस्परानुकथनं पावनं भगवद्यशः ।
मिथो रतिर्मिथस्तुष्टिर्निवृत्तिर्मिथ आत्मनः ॥
स्मरन्तः स्मारयन्तश्च मिथोऽघौघहरं हरिम् ।
भक्त्या सञ्जातया भक्त्या बिभ्रत्युत्पुलकां तनुम् ॥

(Śrīmad Bhāgavata XI. iii. 21-31)

"Who is ever content, mentally united to Me, has controlled his self, and is fixed in resolve; who has dedicated his mind and intellect to Me, that devotee is dear to Me.

"He who is not a source of annoyance to the world, and who never feels offended with the world, who is free from delight and anger, perturbation and fear; he is dear to Me.

"He who desires nothing, who is internally and externally pure, is expert in work, indifferent to both pleasure and pain and has risen above all distractions, who renounces the feeling of doership in every undertaking that devotee is dear to Me.

"He who is neither delighted with nor feels repelled by anything, nor grieves, nor desires, who renounces both good and evil and is full of Devotion towards Me, is dear to Me.

"He who is alike to friend and foe and honour and dishonour, who is alike to heat and cold, pleasure and pain, and is freed from attachments:-

"He who takes praise and reproach alike, who is given to meditation and content with anything that comes; without attachment to home, fixed in mind and full of Devotion towards Me; that man is dear to Me.

"Those who partake of the nectar of wisdom herein laid down; who are endowed with faith and are supremely devoted to Me; such devotees are extremely dear to Me."*

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अद्वेष्टा सर्वभूतानां मैत्रः करुण एव च ।
निर्ममो निरहङ्कारः समदुःखसुखः क्षमी ॥
सन्तुष्टः सततं योगी यतात्मा दृढनिश्चयः ।
मय्यर्पितमनोबुद्धिर्यो मद्भक्तः स मे प्रियः ॥
यस्मान्नोद्विजते लोको लोकान्नोद्विजते च यः ।
हर्षामर्षभयोद्वेगैर्मुक्तो यः स च मे प्रियः ॥
अनपेक्षः शुचिर्दक्ष उदासीनो गतव्यथः ।
सर्वारम्भपरित्यागी यो मद्भक्तः स मे प्रियः ॥
यो न हृष्यति न द्वेष्टि न शोचति न काङ्क्षति ।
शुभाशुभपरित्यागी भक्तिमान्यः स मे प्रियः ॥
समः शत्रौ च मित्रे च तथा मानापमानयोः ।
शीतोष्णसुखदुःखेषु समः सङ्गविवर्जितः ॥

These marks pointed out by the Lord must be naturally present in all devotees who have attained Siddhi (success) through God-Realization, and devotees who are in the path should attempt to regulate their conduct recognizing these to be their ideals of life.

Thus, Divine Love, which is difficult of attainment even by Yogīs, can be attained by the devotee through study of, and meditation on, the teachings of devotional scriptures, and through sustained application to practices which promote the spirit of Devotion.

सुखदुःखेच्छालाभादित्यक्ते काले प्रतीक्ष्यमाणे
क्षणार्द्धमपि व्यर्थं न नेयम् ॥ ७७ ॥

तुल्यनिन्दास्तुतिर्मौनी सन्तुष्टो येन केनचित् ।
अनिकेतः स्थिरमतिर्भक्तिमान्मे प्रियो नरः ॥
ये तु धर्म्यामृतमिदं यथोक्तं पर्युपासते ।
श्रद्दधाना मत्परमा भक्तास्तेऽतीव मे प्रियाः ॥

(Gītā. XII. 13-20)

77. EVEN HALF A SECOND SHOULD NOT BE WASTED (WITHOUT BHAJANA) IN EXPECTATION OF THAT MOMENT WHEN PLEASURE AND PAIN, DESIRE AND SENSE OF WORLDLY GAIN, ETC., WOULD BE (TOTALLY) ELIMINATED.

There is no doubt that when perfection is attained in the path of Devotion all struggles between pairs of opposites like pleasure and pain, gain and loss, etc., automatically cease, and there no longer persists the desire for any worldly object. But if the practicant only waits in expectation of that auspicious moment, and does not in the meantime carry on any practice, how will he get over his present degraded condition, and suddenly, and without any effort, reach that blessed state? Moreover, human life is uncertain even for a second, no one knows at what particular moment a man may be overtaken by Death, - therefore, the idea that the practice of Bhajana would be taken up on reaching a particular state should be given up, and whatever the present condition of the aspirant may be, he should immediately seek the shelter of divine grace and start the practice. He should not wait even for half a second. Kabīr says:-

> "What you propose to do tomorrow, do
> today, what you propose to do today,
> do this very instant;
> In the twinkling of an eye destruction

> will overtake you, when will you do it
> (the practice of Bhajana) again?"*

In the twinkling of an eye, Death will hold you in its terrible jaws; when will you, then, find time for the practice? Do not argue, "I am quite young now, it is the time for me to play, eat and enjoy the world; I shall take to Bhajana, when I grow old." Who can guarantee that you will not quit the world before reaching old age? The naked sword of Death is constantly hanging over your head. There is an illustration to bring home this truth. A bee entering the corolla of a lotus started sucking its nectar and got infatuated with the sweetness of its smell, when the dusk approached. With the setting of the sun, the petals of the lotus closed; so the lotus shut itself up within its calyx, and the bee, possessing the power to bore through the hardest timber, got itself shut up within the petals due to its infatuation, and began to reflect as follows:-

> "The night will pass, and there will be morning again; when the sun will rise and its rays will fall on the lotus, the petals will open and I shall

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* काल करै सो आज कर, आज करै सो अब।
पलमें परलै होयगी, फेरि करैगा कब॥

> get out of the lotus. Till then let me continue to enjoy this nectar."*

When the bee was reflecting thus, a mad elephant came, and, snatching the lotus from its stem, put it into its mouth, and the bee together with the lotus got smashed on the tusk of the infuriated elephant. Thus the desire of the bee (for freedom) remained unrealized. Therefore, the idea that on the completion of a particular work the practice of Bhajana will be started should be wholly given up. Because, firstly, the unrestrained desires of man are never fulfilled, secondly, if and when they are (even partially) fulfilled, they bring in their train new wants and new desires, and man has to devote his time and energies for their satisfaction. Objects of the world, which are by nature incomplete and transient, can never bring complete satisfaction to man. However large may be the measure of a worldly-minded man's acquisition of earthly objects, he will never feel himself above wants, and will come to the end of his span of earthly life suffering throughout from the pangs of his (real or fancied) wants. Therefore, one should devote oneself to Bhajana from the very start, giving up the idea that he will do so after having completely satisfied his worldly wants, or after acquiring thorough satisfaction from enjoyment of worldly objects.

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* रात्रिर्गमिष्यति भविष्यति सुप्रभातं
भास्वानुदेष्यति हसिष्यति पङ्कजश्रीः ।
इत्थं विचिन्तयति कोशगते द्विरेफे
हा हन्त हन्त नलिनीं गज उज्जहार ॥

Besides, there is this fact to be considered that due to the influence of good company, the urge for God-Realization, or attainment of Devotion, has grown within him at that particular moment; he has, even if for a moment, recognized that as the goal of his life: the idea is revolving within his mind that he will begin the practice for the realization of the goal after reaching a certain state in his worldly circumstances. Is he sure that this is not a deceptive train of thought? In the first instance, there is no certainty that he will ever realize the circumstances for which he may be craving; secondly, where is the guarantee that the goal itself will not change by that time? But if the practice is immediately started for the realization of the goal, then the more one will advance in the practice the more will his attachment for it grow, he will begin to feel spiritual gain, and his devotion for the practice will go on strengthening. Contrary to this, if one only recognizes the goal and does nothing to advance towards it, then the next moment through the influence of a different kind of association his goal itself may change. Therefore, without waiting for favourable or opportune time, the practice of Bhajana should be started at once. The auspicious desire imbibed from Satsanga (good association) should not be allowed to die of inanition. Where is the guarantee that one's health will always remain unimpaired? Bhajana and other devotional practices are possible so long as the body is in health. If the health is impaired, the senses become weak and old age supervenes, the mind will never feel any interest in Bhajana unless through previous practice the habit has become thoroughly established. That is why Mahārājā Bhartṛhari said:-

> "So long as this body is in good health, old age at a distance, the senses are strong, and some days of life are yet left, the wise man should vigorously strive for his highest good. What does it profit a man who starts digging a well when the house is already on fire?"*

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* यावत्स्वस्थमिदं कलेवरगृहं यावच्च दूरे जरा
यावच्चेन्द्रियशक्तिरप्रतिहता यावत्क्षयो नायुषः ।
आत्मश्रेयसि तावदेव विदुषा कार्यः प्रयत्नो महान्
प्रोद्दीप्ते भवने च कूपखननं प्रत्युद्यमः कीदृशः ॥

(Vairāgya-Śataka)

It is on account of this that devotees, taking their refuge in the Lord, wail out from the depth of their heart:-

> "Life is being wasted from moment to moment, youth is approaching its end, the day that is passed does not return, Kāla (Time) is devouring the world, the Goddess of Wealth is as unsteady as waves in a river, life is as fleeting as lightning itself; therefore, O Lord, save me, seeking refuge in Thee, this very instant"*

Again:-

> "O Kṛṣṇa, let this swan in the form of my mind enter this very day the cage of Your lotus feet. How will Your remembrance be possible at the time of breath going out (of this body) when the throat will be obstructed by

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* आयुर्नश्यति पश्यतां [illegible] न याति [illegible] जीवितं
[illegible] पुनर्न दिवस [illegible] त्वं रक्ष रक्षाधुना ॥
प्रत्यायान्ति [illegible] तरङ्गभङ्ग [illegible] शरणद
[illegible] स्मान्मां श[illegible]

> excessive growth of phlegm, bile and wind?"*

Therefore, even the least time should not be wasted without the practice of Bhajana, The time that is spent in Bhajana is usefully spent and the rest is all wasted. Recognizing the value of time, every single breath should be as carefully devoted to the remembrance of God as a miser uses his limited number of coins. Truly speaking, time spent without Bhajana is the most terrible time. It is the greatest of calamity, says Hanumān:-

> "O Lord, when there is neither Your remembrance nor Bhajana, that is (the time of) calamity and misfortune."§

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* कृष्ण त्वदीयपदपङ्कजपञ्जरान्ते
अद्यैव मे विशतु मानसराजहंसः।
प्रा[illegible]याणसमये कफवातपित्तैः
[illegible]वरोधनविधौ स्मरणं कुतस्ते॥

[illegible] हनुमान बिपा[illegible]
[illegible]ोई।
[illegible] भ[illegible] न हो[illegible]

> "The moment spent without the Kīrtana of God's Name and Glory should be regarded as the greatest of loss: that moment is the moment of Ignorance and Delusion."*

There should be no waiting for any favourable or opportune moment for the practice of Bhajana. If it is done the whole of this invaluable human life will be wasted. The best utility of human life lies in the practice of Bhajana. Through the continued practice of Bhajana there will come a day when through Divine Grace our entire struggle between the pair of opposites like pleasure and pain will cease and the heart will be flooded with the pure light of Divine Love; all the quarters and the entire universe will be filled with the rays of that cool, soft light, and there will be no end to our joy.

Truly speaking, the duty of the devotee does not lie in thinking what might be the effect of his practice of Bhajana; his duty lies only in carrying on the practice with utmost devotion and Love. He should love for the sake of Love; he should practise Bhajana for the sake of Bhajana. The practice of Bhajana should become part and parcel of his character, he must be unable to do without it. He should be prepared to suffer the loss of every other thing in the world but not of Bhajana. In the Bhāgavata it is stated:-

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* सा हानिस्तन्महच्छिद्रं स मोहः स च विभ्रमः ।
यन्मुहूर्तं क्षणं वापि वासुदेवं न कीर्तयेत् ॥

> "If the devotee is offered all the wealth and splendour of the three worlds in exchange for his discontinuance of the remembrance of the lotus feet of God even for half a second, he will not agree to it. The bee of his heart remains unshakably attached to those Divine Feet, which even the Devas fail to realize through constant meditation and search."*

Thus the devotee craves for nothing else. In a tone of anxiety and distress he goes on repeatedly saying, "I seek neither salvation, nor knowledge, nor worldly prosperity, nor supernatural powers, nor an undying fame. Let me take birth in any species of being; even this does not worry me. But, O my dearest Lord, let my Love for You, my unmotived Love, my wayward and blind Love, my purest Love without any other dross, Love which is full of You, may grow from day to day."

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* त्रिभुवनविभवहेतवेऽप्यकुण्ठ-
स्मृतिरजितात्मसुरादिभिर्विमृग्यात् ।
न चलति भगवत्पदारविन्दा-
लवनिमिषार्धमपि यः स वैष्णवाग्र्यः ॥

> "From birth to birth, let my Love be centred on Śrī Rāma's feet.
> This is the only boon I crave for, and no other."*

Āchārya Śrī Śankara prays to the Lord in the form of the Universal Mother:-

> "I desire neither salvation, nor worldly prosperity,
> "I desire not wisdom, nor the happiness of possessing a beautiful wife.
> "I pray Thee, Mother, that my life may end carrying on the Japa of Thy Names - Mr̥dānī, Rudrāṇī, Śiva, Śiva, Bhavānī." etc. §

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* जनम जनम रति रामपद यह बरदान न आन॥

§

न मोक्षस्याकाङ्क्षा वरविभववाञ्छापि च न मे
न विज्ञानापेक्षा शशिमुखि सुखेच्छापि न पुनः ।
अतस्त्वां संयाचे जननि जननं यातु मम वै
मृडानी रुद्राणी शिव शिव भवानीति जपतः ॥

अहिंसासत्यशौचदयास्तिक्यादिचारित्र्याणि परिपालनीयानि ॥ ७८ ॥

78. (THE ASPIRANT OF DIVINE LOVE) SHOULD SCRUPULOUSLY OBSERVE ALL ASPECTS OF SADĀCHĀRA (RIGHT CONDUCT) LIKE AHIṂSA (NON-INJURY TO OTHERS), TRUTH, PURITY, COMPASSION; FAITH IN THE EXISTENCE OF GOD, ETC.

In aphorism 76 it has been advised to perform actions which lead to the growth of the spirit of Devotion. In the present aphorism by singling out five special items of conduct, the author establishes the extreme necessity of their observance.

The divine qualities are part and parcel of the character of devotees. Wherever there is observed any genuine growth of Devotion, the divine qualities are inevitably present there. It is an error on the part of some people when they say, "The primary thing is to cultivate Devotion; if the devotee lacks the higher qualities, what does it matter? Man may, indeed, commit any amount of sin, but if he is a devotee, he has nothing to care." This statement is as absurd and unreasonable as to say, "Let the sun rise, then if darkness should persist in the world, let it persist." As soon as the sun rises, darkness can no longer persist anywhere, and all the quarters of the earth grow automatically bright. In the same manner, the heart in which the sun of devotion rises will be automatically filled with its rays in the form of the divine qualities. It is no doubt partially true that Mahātmās, who have actually realized God, cannot be judged from their external conduct. All the same, there are certain qualities which are bound to be present in them. The five qualities mentioned in the present aphorism are some of them. If an individual lacking these qualities, gains the reputation of a Sādhu or devotee, caution should be observed in dealing with him. In the majority of cases, people who lack these qualities cannot be Sadhus or devotees at all. The practicant should specially test himself on the standard of these very qualities. He must know that if remembrance of God and the divine qualities are growing in him, he is making progress in the path of Devotion; if his thoughts are centred mostly on the world, and there is no growth of the divine qualities, then he is making no progress; and if worldly thoughts and the demoniacal qualities are growing in him, he is advancing towards a fall. It is the nature of the devotee to meditate on God with a loving heart, and his life should be marked by the presence of the divine qualities. He renounces every other thing in life, but these two he never renounces. In some particular cases, devotees, on the attainment of Siddhi, have no doubt to change their modes of life, according to the behest or pleasure of God. But these are exceptions and not the rule. Even in such cases, it is not attachment, egoism, desire, pride or delusion which bring about the change. Whenever due to some circumstances, there appears a conflict between the devotee's mode of life and the spirit of Divine Love, which is inherent in him, he would, after securing the consent of God, give up propriety of conduct for the protection of his own particular Dharma, his Swadharma. The illustrations of Bharata, Prahlāda, Bibhīṣaṇa and the Gopīs, when they disobeyed mother, father, brother and husband for the sake of God, throw light only on this aspect. But even there, it will be observed, there was no deviation from Sadāchāra, or right conduct. In the interest of the cultivation of Divine Love, the devotees in most cases have taken sufferings upon themselves. The spiritual state in which all injunctions and prohibitions of Dharma get offered to the feet of God is a different state altogether. It should be remembered, however, that these get offered, and have not to be consciously offered. The load of injunctions and prohibitions is taken out of the shoulders of that self-forgetful, love-intoxicated devotee; he himself does not consciously put down the load. Even in that state of intoxication (of Divine Love) he does not exhibit any evil propensity. But here we are discussing not the case of devotees, who have already realized God, but of practicants and aspirants in whose case it is necessary that they should cultivate and preserve all the divine qualities and aspects of Sadachara enjoined by the scriptures with extreme care and attention. The definitions of the five qualities, specially mentioned by the author in this aphorism, may be shortly understood to be as follows:-

Ahiṃsa - It is that quality of the mind, which prevents one from doing anything, through the body, mind and speech, which may cause suffering to any creature, either in the present or in the future; it induces one to be engaged constantly in the attempt to make other creatures happy.

Truth - It is the cultivation of the spirit to convey to another, through speech, writing or hint, exactly what has been seen, heard or understood about a person, or thing. It means also utterance of only such words as are true, and, at the same time, sweet and beneficial. Some people hold it to be necessary to make use of harsh words in their expression of Truth, and declare with pride that they are votaries of Truth, and do not care whether others feel pleasure or pain through their statements of Truth. This attitude, however, is not proper. Keeping them free from the sentiments of enmity, hatred, slander and backbiting, words should be impregnated with the qualities of sweetness and Truth, both from change their modes of life, according to the behest or pleasure of God. But these are exceptions and not the rule. Even in such cases, it is not attachment, egoism, desire, pride or delusion which bring about the change. Whenever due to some circumstances, there appears a conflict between the devotee's mode of life and the spirit of Divine Love, which is inherent in him, he would, after securing the consent of God, give up propriety of conduct for the protection of his own particular Dharma, his Swadharma. The illustrations of Bharata, Prahlāda, Bibhīṣaṇa and the Gopīs, when they disobeyed mother, father, brother and husband for the sake of God, throw light only on this aspect. But even there, it will be observed, there was no deviation from Sadāchāra, or right conduct. In the interest of the cultivation of Divine Love, the devotees in most cases have taken sufferings upon themselves. The spiritual state in which all injunctions and prohibitions of Dharma get offered to the feet of God is a different state altogether. It should be remembered, however, that these get offered, and have not to be consciously offered. The load of injunctions and prohibitions is taken out of the shoulders of that self-forgetful, love-intoxicated devotee; he himself does not consciously put down the load. Even in that state of intoxication (of Divine Love) he does not exhibit any evil propensity. But here we are discussing not the case of devotees, who have already realized God, but of practicants and aspirants in whose case it is necessary that they should cultivate and preserve all the divine qualities and aspects of Sadachara enjoined by the scriptures with extreme care and attention. The definitions of the five qualities, specially mentioned by the author in this aphorism, may be shortly understood to be as follows:-

Ahiṃsa - It is that quality of the mind, which prevents one from doing anything, through the body, mind and speech, which may cause suffering to any creature, either in the present or in the future; it induces one to be engaged constantly in the attempt to make other creatures happy.

Truth - It is the cultivation of the spirit to convey to another, through speech, writing or hint, exactly what has been seen, heard or understood about a person, or thing. It means also utterance of only such words as are true, and, at the same time, sweet and beneficial. Some people hold it to be necessary to make use of harsh words in their expression of Truth, and declare with pride that they are votaries of Truth, and do not care whether others feel pleasure or pain through their statements of Truth. This attitude, however, is not proper. Keeping them free from the sentiments of enmity, hatred, slander and backbiting, words should be impregnated with the qualities of sweetness and Truth, both from one's own point of view, as well as from the point of view of others. Just as the rays of the moon impart light and are at the same time cool, even so the speech of the devotee should be truthful and sweet - that is to say, it should scatter both light and peace. Truth, which may lead to another's injury, is not a desirable thing.

Purity - External and internal, both these forms of Purity are necessary.

EXTERNAL PURITY

(A) To keep the body externally clean through the use of earth, water, etc.

(B) To maintain purity of wealth, through earning of livelihood by truthful and unexceptionable means, without imposing upon the rights of any other individual, or class.

(C) To impart purity to food by offering to God articles cooked in a pure place by a cook who had bathed himself and prepared the articles from pure vegetables and corns.

(D) To maintain purity of conduct and dealing, through innocent, straightforward and loving behaviour.

(E) To maintain purity of the home, through entertainment of guests and loud chanting of the Divine Name.

(F) To maintain the purity of all other external actions by regulating them according to the injunctions of the scriptures.

INTERNAL PURITY

To keep the mind, as far as possible, free from evils like hypocrisy, enmity, pride, attachments, jealousy, hatred, grief, sinful thoughts, idle worldly thoughts, etc., and cultivate in their stead simplicity, love, humility, dispassion, non-hatred, propitiousness, good thoughts and meditation on God, and thereby maintain the purity of the mind.

Compassion - To feel restless at the sight of human misery, whether in the family or outside it, and irrespective of whether the individual suffering is a friend or a foe, and try, as far as possible to remove that misery even at the cost of some sacrifice and suffering. This sentiment should be cultivated towards every creature at every moment of one's existence. Actions which may lead to the injury or suffering of other creatures should be abandoned. Similarly, attempt should be made to stop practices prevalent in society which lead to injury to creatures.

Faith in the existence of God - Faith in God and the scriptures should be unambiguous, clear and living, and both God and the directions of the scriptures should be constantly present before the mental eye of the practicant. The moment one comes to believe that God exists, that He is all-pervading, Lord of all, almighty, omniscient, supremely compassionate, supremely friendly, fond of His devotees, friend of the friendless, and always present everywhere, all sin and misery will get automatically destroyed. The need for the cultivation of this faith is paramount in every respect. With the generation of faith in the existence of God, as well as in His power and glory, the mind will itself turn towards God. God is the store or repository of all that man requires. If he wants Knowledge, God is the embodiment of Knowledge; if he wants Love, God is Love itself; if he wants Bliss (Ānanda), God the very embodiment of Bliss; if he seeks Dispassion (वैराग्य), God is the supreme embodiment of Dispassion; if he seeks wealth, the Goddess of Wealth, Lakṣmī, abandoning Her unsteadiness, is constantly engaged in serving the Divine Feet; if he seeks glory, the entire creation manifests only a particle of His infinite glory; if he seeks fame, the current of fame proceeds from God; in short, whatever beauty, sweetness, love, tenderness, knowledge, dispassion, glory, wealth, enjoyment, happiness, etc., we observe in the world, and the highest conception we may form of them, compass only an insignificant portion of God. The objects of this world, and our highest conception about them, will be no more in comparison than a drop of water of that ocean of infinite beauty, sweetness, glory and other benign qualities. He who knows God as such, and develops faith in Him, cannot leave God and turn his mind to any other object, even for half a second; neither will he find pleasure or pain in the presence or absence of the momentary enjoyments of the world. No doubt, this faith in God's existence should be a true faith. We should constantly remember the history of Prahlāda as an illustration of living faith in the existence of God. At the command of his father, Hiraṇyakaśipu, hundreds and thousands of demons march furiously with their deadly weapons to kill him. But Prahlāda says:-

> "O ye demons, my Lord Viṣṇu is present in these very weapons of yours, He is present within you, within me, and everywhere. By the power of this Truth, let all your weapons fail to produce any effect on me."*

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* विष्णुः शस्त्रेषु युष्मासु मयि चासौ व्यवस्थितः ।
दैतेयास्तेन सत्येन माक्रमन्त्वायुधानि च ॥

(Viṣṇupurāṇa I. xvii. 33)

The weapons of the demons failed, although they struck Prahlāda hard, the latter felt not the least pain in his body.

In the ferocious snakes and their venom, in the huge intoxicated elephants and their tusks as hard as adamant, Prahlāda saw his own beloved Lord. Therefore, they failed to do him any injury. He was thrown into the fire; but Prahlāda saw there the Form of God, possessing the colour of a newly-formed cloud. He said:-

> "O father, this fire sent by the wind does not burn me. All the sides appear to me as cool and refreshing, as if I am surrounded by screens of lotus."*

The priests brought forth the Kṛtyā (a female destructive deity) to kill Prahlāda, but when failing to kill him, the Kṛtyā killed the priests themselves. Prahlāda said:-

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तातैष वह्निः पवनेरितोऽपि
न मां दहत्यत्र समन्ततोऽहम्।
पश्यामि पद्मास्तरणास्तृतानि
शीतानि सर्वाणि दिशाम्मुखानि ॥

(Viṣṇupurāṇa I. xvii. 47)

> "Let these priests come to life by the power of the Truth that the all-pervading Lord Viṣṇu, the Teacher of the World, permeates every being. If I find immanent and imperishable Viṣṇu present in those, who are attempting to kill me, let these priests come to life."*

Prahlāda's strong, unshakable faith in the existence of God, brought the priests to life. Finally, when in answer to a query from his father, Hiraṇyakaśipu, Prahlāda declared with unflinching faith, and with a certainty which could not be shaken - "Yes, my Lord Viṣṇu is present everywhere. He is present even in this pillar", God had to manifest Himself from the pillar to prove the truth of the statement of His servant and devotee. How marvellous is this firmness of faith, and how miraculous the result! This is faith in the existence of God, in the true sense of the term.

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यथा सर्वेषु भूतेषु सर्वव्यापी जगद्गुरुः ।
विष्णुरेव तथा सर्वे जीवन्त्वेते पुरोहिताः ॥
यथा सर्वगतं विष्णुं मन्यमानोऽनपायिनम् ।
चिन्तयाम्यरिपक्षेऽपि जीवन्त्वेते पुरोहिताः ॥

(Viṣṇupurāṇa I. xviii, 40-41)

The devotee should constantly attempt to maintain this faith and develop it more and more.

By adding the word ' आदि '(etc.) to the word ' आस्तिक्य ' in the aphorism, the author intends to point to the other divine qualities (not mentioned in the aphorism). The Gītā lays down twenty-six qualities to be divine by nature. The Lord says -

> "O Bharata, fearlessness, purity of heart, fixity in Yoga with God (faith in Divine Existence), charity, control of senses, sacrifices, study of scriptures, austerity, straightforwardness, harmlessness, truthfulness, freedom from wrath, self-abnegation, tranquillity, absence of the tendency, to speak ill of others, compassion for God's creatures, absence of cupidity, tenderness of heart and sobriety, spiritual energy, forgiveness, fortitude, purity of mind and body, absence of enmity and absence of pride - these are the

> characteristics of him who is born with a divine legacy."*

The devotee alone possesses these divine qualities. That is why he is styled a 'Deva'. The Padmapurāṇa says:-

> "There are two types of beings in this world - one Daiva (divine) and the other Āsura (demoniac). The devotee belongs to the Daiva class. Other beings belong to the Āsura group."§

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* अभयं सत्त्वसंशुद्धिर्ज्ञानयोगव्यवस्थितिः ।
दानं दमश्च यज्ञश्च स्वाध्यायस्तप आर्जवम् ॥
अहिंसा सत्यमक्रोधस्त्यागः शान्तिरपैशुनम् ।
दया भूतेष्वलोलुप्त्वं मार्दवं ह्रीरचापलम् ॥
तेजः क्षमा धृतिः शौचमद्रोहो नातिमानिता ।
भवन्ति सम्पदं दैवीमभिजातस्य भारत ॥

(XVI. 1-3)

§ द्वौ भूतसर्गौ लोकेऽस्मिन् दैव आसुर एव च ।
विष्णुभक्तः स्मृतो दैव आसुरस्तद्विपर्ययः ॥

(Padmapurāṇa)

सर्वदा सर्वभावेन निश्चिन्तितैर्भगवानेव
भजनीयः ॥ ७६ ॥

79. EVERY MOMENT, WITH A WHOLE HEART, GIVING UP ALL OTHER THOUGHTS, ONE SHOULD PRACTISE BHAJANA (AND BHAJANA ALONE).

This aphorism is exceptionally valuable. The Devarṣi lays down here the beautiful mode of Bhajana practised by devotees following the path of Love. Really speaking, the person who properly comes to know the divine qualities as well as the secret and glory of God, nay, who even believes after hearing about them from the lips of saints, cannot devote his mind, speech and body to anything but God. Lord Śankara says:-

> "O Umā, he who has known the character of Rāma, does not like to do anything but Bhajana."*

When a poor man comes to possess a philosopher's stone, why should he look to anything else? God alone is the Supreme Truth, He alone is the end of all, He is the substratum of all, He is almighty and the repository of all divine virtues, He is the reservoir of beauty, sweetness and glory, the very embodiment of Knowledge and Dispassion, the solid image of Bliss, and although He is so great, He is also our greatest friend and is anxiously awaiting with out-stretched arms our arrival near him, so that He may give us an embrace; he who knows this truth - whether he is a man possessing a motive (सकामी) or has transcended all motives (अकामी) whether he is a worldly man or an aspirant to salvation, whether he is only a practicant or one who has attained Siddhi (success) in God-Realization - can he ever leave God even for half a second and engage his mind to wait upon anything else? We do not adore God and wait upon Him, because we have not yet known His glory. If we have heard about His glory, we have not yet sufficiently believed in it. The Devarṣi enjoins us to believe in it and engage ourselves constantly, through our mind, speech and body, in the practice of Bhajana or our most beloved Lord, and drive out all other thoughts from the mind. He enjoins us to free the mind of every other thought. Just as a child in the lap of the mother gives up all care, even so we should make ourselves servants of the Lord, and give up all care. He whose protector is Rāma Himself, what can cause him any worry? Therefore, renouncing every other thing, giving up hope or expectation from anything else, regarding everything to be insignificant before God, and in comparison with the taste of that divine nectar viewing the tastes of worldly objects as quite distasteful, and the total beauty of the world as quite trivial before that essense of Beauty, the Form of Śyāmasundara (Śrī Kṛṣṇa of dark-blue colour), we should engage ourselves in the practice of Bhajana. We should offer our mind and heart to Him, surrender ourselves exclusively to Him; engage the mind to think of Him, alone, the intellect to reason about Him, the speech in singing His praises, the ears to hearing His glories and sports, the tongue to tasting His Prasada (food offered to Him), the nose to smelling the lotus of His feet, the body to feel His touch, the eyes to see always His beloved Form everywhere, the hands to serve Him. Thus we should offer Him our all - body, mind and all our earthly possessions.

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* उमा राम सुभाउ जिन्ह जाना ।
तिन्हहि भजन तजि भाव न आना ॥

So long as we continue to regard the objects of the world as our own and maintain our attachments to them, we can never be free from worries and anxious thoughts; these destructible, transient and ever-changing objects will not allow us to be free from worries; so we should withdraw from them our sense of 'Mine' or attachment, and offer them to Him, who is their real owner. The moment we offer them to God, we will be freed from worries. Then, no longer shall we be swayed by the fear of their destruction, and neither the sense of want, nor the fire of worldly desires will give us any more trouble. When thus freed from all thoughts, we will devote ourselves to Bhajana, we will, from time to time, get a distant view of that divine ocean of Bliss, Sweetness and Beauty, and then our heart will refuse to turn to anything else. Worldly prosperity will lose all charm for us, and if in any corner of our heart some such desire remains hidden, we will discover the very store of prosperity lying at our Lord's feet. Therefore, giving up this unchastity in the form of attachment to worldly things, let us turn ourselves into faithful and devoted wives of that beloved Lord, the sole and dearest object of delight. Śrī Sundardāsjī echoes this very sentiment when he writes:-

> "(My) husband is my Love, He is my religious rite, He is my welfare, I am devoted to Him (my husband).
> (My) husband is sacrifices and Yoga, He is the source of sweetness. He removes all grief, He is the object to be won.
> (My) husband is Knowledge, He is meditation, He is virtue, He is charity;
> He is the merit gained through bath in sacred places, He is the conclusion of my philosophy.
> My husband is my chastity. I have no refuge but He.
> 'Sundara' is from every point of view, worshipper of a single husband.
> The lover of water, fish, when separated from water, gives up his life;

Just as the snake when separated from its jewel cannot live;
The lovers of the rain-drop falling from the star Swāti is known throughout the world -
One is the oyster, and the other Chātaka (bird):
The lover of the Sun is the lotus in the lake;
Just as the Chakora (partridge) lives as the lover of the Moon,
Even so, O 'Sundara', attach your Love to the Lord,
And let not your attention be diverted to anything else".*

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पतिहीसूँ प्रेम होय, पतिहीसूँ नेम होय,
पतिहीसूँ छेम होय, पतिहीसूँ रत है ।
पति ही है जग्य-जोग, पति ही है रसभोग,
पतिहीसूँ मिटै सोग, पतिहीको जत है ॥

पतिहीको ग्यान-ध्यान, पतिहीको पुन्न-दान,
पति ही है तीर्थस्नान, पतिहीको मत है ।
पति बिनु पति नाहिं, पति बिनु गति नाहिं
'सुन्दर' सकल बिधि, एक पतिव्रत है ॥

जलको सनेही मीन बिछुरत तजै प्रान,
मनि बिनु अहि जैसे जीवत न लहिये ।
स्वातिबिंदुको सनेही प्रगट जगत माँहिं,
एक सीप दूसरो सु चातकहु कहिये ॥

The Lord Himself exhorts us through Arjuna in the Gītā:-

> "O Arjuna, merge your mind in Me, be My devotee, sacrifice to Me, prostrate yourself before Me, you shall then without doubt come to Me. This I promise to you, for you are dear to Me. Giving up the shelter of all other Dharmas, surrender yourself wholly to Me. I shall Myself liberate you from all sins. Therefore, do not grieve."*

If even after this definite assurance from the Lord we fail to devote ourselves constantly with a whole heart, and free from worries, to the practice of Bhajana, who is more unfortunate than we?

रबिको सनेही पुनि कमल सरोवरमें,
ससिको सनेही हू चकोर जैसे रहिये।
तैसे ही 'सुन्दर' एक प्रभुसूँ सनेह जोर,
और कुछ देखि काहू ओर नाहि वहिये॥

* मन्मना भव मद्भक्तो मद्याजी मां नमस्कुरु ।
मामेवैष्यसि सत्यं ते प्रतिजाने प्रियोऽसि मे ॥
सर्वधर्मान् परित्यज्य मामेकं शरणं व्रज ।
अहं त्वा सर्वपापेभ्यो मोक्षयिष्यामि मा शुचः ॥

(Gītā XVIII, 65-66)

Therefore, realizing our highest good to lie only in this, we should devote ourselves whole-heartedly to the Bhajana and Kīrtana of Śrī Hari's Name, every moment of our life, whether we are engaged in action or resting, whether we are awake or asleep, seeing the existence of God in every object and abandoning all worries about profit and loss, life and death.

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THE FRUIT OF DIVINE LOVE AND THE SUPREME EXCELLENCE OF DEVOTION

स कीर्त्यमानः शीघ्रमेवाविर्भवति अनुभावयति च भक्तान् ॥ ८० ॥

80. WHEN CHANTED (WITH LOVE) GOD SPEEDILY REVEALS HIMSELF AND BLESSES DEVOTEES WITH HIS PERCEPTION.

According to the previous aphorism, exclusive performance of Bhajana compels God soon to reveal Himself and become an object of perception to the devotee. Here the word ' आविर्भवति ' implies the manifestation of the form of God, which is the essence of all divine beauty and sweetness. In reality, however, there is no difference between the aspects of God with attributes and form, and without the same. He, who is Brahma, which is beyond the mind and intellect, is Himself the Creator with attributes, formless, and all-pervading; it is He, who is the soul of the universe; it is He, who manifests Himself as Śrī Rāma and Śrī Kṛṣṇa; it is He, who is Mahāśiva, Mahāviṣṇu, or Mahādevī; again, it is He, who is the Universal Person (विराट् पुरुष). There is nothing which is apart from Him. Drawn by the Love of the obstinate, Love-intoxicated devotee, He makes the divine Bliss aspect His instrument, and blesses the devotee by revealing

Himself as the very gem of Beauty, adorned with clothes, garland, fragrance, weapons and ornaments, which are all divine and spiritual in character.

> "The saints, men of wisdom, Purāṇas and Vedas, all declare that there is no difference between Saguṇa (Divine manifestation with attributes) and Aguṇa (the Absolute).
> "He who is Absolute, Formless, Invisible, Unborn appears as Saguna (with attributes) compelled by the Love of the devotee."*

It is not a fact that this Form is a creation of Māyā, the Mother of the Universe. All its elements are divine, holy, eternal, spiritual and part and parcel of God Himself. That is why even the extinct mind of Munis, who have realized the soul, comes to life in the presence of this divine, all-sweet Form and gets infatuated with every single part of it. The heart gets indifferent to form, taste, smell, sound and touch, which are the objects of the senses, even when the desire for liberation is strong; and this fact of the attraction felt by self-realized Munis proves that the Form, Taste, Fragrance, Sound and Touch of the divine manifestation are no products of Māyā consisting of the three Guṇas. They are full of all virtues and attributes and are the eternal aspects of the Form of the Lord, who is above the Guṇas. That is why the sages get attracted by them. That is why even the greatest teacher of Vedānta, Āchārya Śrī Śankara, speaks with reference to Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa - "Śrī Kṛṣṇa, who showed many universes to Brahma, each universe possessing its own distinctive and wonderful Brahma; who showed the cowherd boys and calves and all the Forms of Viṣṇu manifested in the different universes; the sacred water proceeding from whose feet is held by Śrī Śiva on His head, is different from the Trimurti (Brahma, Viṣṇu and Śiva - divine incarnations in Aṃsa (part) manifested in every universe for regulating it); He is an immutable, blue-coloured effulgence embodying Sat, Chit and Ānanda (Existence, Knowledge and Bliss)."*

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* सगुनहि अगुनहि नहिं कछु भेदा।
गावहिं मुनि पुरान बुध बेदा॥
अगुन अरूप अलख अज जोई।
भगत प्रेम बस सगुन सो होई॥

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* ब्रह्माण्डानि बहूनि पङ्कजभवान् प्रत्यण्डमत्यद्भुतान्
गोपान् वत्सयुतानदर्शयदजं विष्णूनशेषांश्च यः ।
शम्भुर्यश्चरणोदकं स्वशिरसा धत्ते च मूर्तित्रयात्
कृष्णो वै पृथगस्ति कोऽप्यविकृतः सच्चिन्मयो नीलिमा ॥

Once Sanaka and other Ṛṣis, who are eternally established in the Self, went to Lord Mahāviṣṇu in His region, the transcendent Vaikuṇṭha. The moment they stood before God and looked at the divine Form, they got enchanted. The more they saw the divine Beauty, the more their eyes refused to be satisfied. Not that it was only the Beauty of God that enchanted them; when bowing to His feet fragrance of Tulasī lying at the lotus feet on the Lord was carried by the wind to their nostrils, and the heart of those Ṛṣis, who were unshakably established in the Bliss of Brahma, got agitated, attracted and fascinated by it, and the hair on their bodies stood erect out of sheer joy.*

This very condition was experienced by King Janaka of Mithilā, chief among the wise, the best among those who possessed the Knowledge of Brahma, when he saw the Forms of Lord Śrī Rāma and Śrī Lakṣmana:-

> "Seeing the sweet, enchanting Form
> the King of Videha (Mithila) became

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* तस्यारविन्दनयनस्य पदारविन्द-
किञ्जल्कमिश्रतुलसीमकरन्दवायुः ।
अन्तर्गतः स्वविवरेण चकार तेषां
संक्षोभमक्षरजुषामपि चित्ततन्वोः ॥
(Śrīmad Bhāgavata, III. xv. 43)

all the more Videha (devoid of body-consciousness).

> "Finding that his heart is merged in Love, the King recalled his discrimination and steadied himself. Bowing his head at the feet of the sage, he said in a choked voice deep with emotion."*

As soon as that reservoir of Beauty appeared before him, the wisdom of the Lord of Videha as if fainted, his body-consciousness began to leave him, his eyes became full of tears. King Janaka wondered what had happened to him. How did the mind of Janaka get fascinated with the physical beauty of boys, which is an object of the sense of sight? He pulled himself up by his discrimination, by the exercise of patience; but he could not restrain himself from enquiring about them. Bowing at the feet of Viśwāmitra, the King attempted to speak, but his wisdom failed to remove the tenderness of his heart; in the course of the speech his voice choked, it became full and heavy. Now hear what the King asked the sage, describing his own condition:-

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* मूरति मधुर मनोहर देखी ।
भयउ बिदेहु बिदेहु बिसेषी ॥
प्रेम मगन मनु जानि नृपु करि बिबेकु धरि धीर ।
बोलेउ मुनि पद नाइ सिरु गदगद गिरा गभीर ॥

> "O Lord, tell me, are these two boys jewels of a line of Munis, or are they descendants of a line of kings? Or, has Brahma Itself, whom the Vedas describe as 'Not this, Not this' appeared as these twin-forms? My mind, which is by nature full of dispassion, gets enchanted at their sight as the Chakora (partridge) gets enchanted at the sight of the moon. It is, therefore, O Lord, I ask you sincerely; tell me, please do not conceal anything.
>
> "As soon as I saw them, my mind got overshelmed with Love, and has renounced, as if by force, the Bliss of Brahma."*

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* कहहु नाथ सुंदर दोउ बालक ।
मुनिकुल तिलक कि नृपकुल पालक ॥
ब्रह्म जो निगम नेति कहि गावा ।
उभय बेष धरि की सोइ आवा ॥
सहज बिरागरूप मनु मोरा ।
थकित होत जिमि चंद चकोरा ॥
ताते प्रभु पूछउँ सतिभाऊ ।
कहहु नाथ जनि करहु दुराऊ ॥
इन्हहि बिलोकत अति अनुरागा ।
बरबस ब्रह्मसुखहि मन त्यागा ॥

With a smile on his lips the sage supported the inference of the King.

The form, which though seen again and again, goes on increasing the desire to see it, must be an extraordinary form. There is no such object in the world which though seen over and over again, increases the desire to see it. It is a common experience that the first sight of an object for which there may be a strong desire gives excessive joy; but the more the sight becomes familiar, the less becomes the attraction for it. But the character of the Beauty of God is such that there will be never any satiety, even though it is seen over and over again. As the Love of the devotee goes on increasing from moment to moment, even so the splendour of God's Beauty goes on increasing. From moment to moment newer and newer aspects of that Beauty begin to unfold themselves in a more and more attractive form. That form of God is not a creation of Māyā. It is wholly a Divine and Supernatural Form; drawn by the Love of the devotee when it manifests itself before him, it makes itself perceptible by raising the devotee to the divine level. So long as that Beauty remains before him, the devotee lives in a divine region; he moves and has his being in the Divine. Then, his senses of external sight and hearing stop their function and he perceives nothing but the sweet Beauty of God. He gets merged in that Beauty. He then obtains the true knowledge of God.

त्रिसत्यस्य भक्तिरेव गरीयसी भक्तिरेव
गरीयसी ॥ ८१ ॥

81. ACCORDING TO ALL THE THREE FORMS OF TRUTH (PRACTISED THROUGH THE BODY, SPEECH AND MIND) THE PATH OF BHAKTI (DEVOTION) IS THE BEST PATH, IT IS THE BEST (OR, IN ALL THE THREE FORMS OF TIME, BHAKTI (DEVOTION) TO TRUE GOD IS THE BEST PATH, IT IS THE BEST).

Truth as practised through the body, speech and mind is called the three forms of Truth. Devarṣi Nārada has realized the superiority of Bhakti from the standpoint of all these three Truths. Therefore, he repeatedly declares that the path of Bhakti is the best path. This statement of the Devarṣi is corroborated even by the Upaniṣads. Thus:-

सर्वोपायान् परित्यज्य भक्तिमाश्रय ।
भक्तिनिष्ठो भव, भक्तिनिष्ठो भव ।।
भक्त्या सर्वसिद्धयः सिद्ध्यन्ति भक्त्यासाध्यं
न किञ्चिदस्ति ।

(Tripādvibhūtinārāyaṇopaniṣad)

"Abandoning all other methods take recourse only to Bhakti (Devotion). Be devoted to Bhakti, be devoted only

> to Bhakti. Through Bhakti all forms of perfection are easily attained. There is nothing which cannot be attained by Bhakti."

Through Bhakti salvation is attained; and the dispenser of salvation, God Himself, manifesting in a Form, plays with the devotee. These are the words of the Lord Himself:-

यथाग्निः सुसमृद्धार्चिः करोत्येधांसि भस्मसात् ।
तथा मद्विषया भक्तिरुद्धवैनांसि कृत्स्नशः ॥

(Śrīmad Bhāgavata II. xiv. 19)

> "O Uddhava, just as a strong fire reduces heaps of wood into ashes, even so Devotion to Me burns out all sins (great and small)."

The spiritual life and practice of the devotee is protected by God, and it is God Himself who arranges God-Realization by the devotee as the fruit of such practice. Everyone is qualified to follow the path of Bhakti. What other path can be superior to it? That is why here and there in the Gītā, the Lord expressed his praise and appreciation of Bhakti. In the twelfth chapter of the Gītā, He went to the length of declaring the devotee to be ' युक्ततम ', the best and highest among those who are united to Him. This is why the Devarṣi defying the whole world declares in a loud voice that according to all the three forms of Truth (practised through body, speech and mind), or in all the three forms of time (past, present and future), the practice of Devotion to true God is the best spiritual path, it is undoubtedly the best.

गुणमाहात्म्यासक्तिरूपासक्तिपूजासक्तिस्मरणा-
सक्तिदास्यासक्तिसख्यासक्तिकान्तासक्तिवात्सल्यास-
क्त्यात्मनिवेदनासक्तितन्मयतासक्तिपरमविरहासक्ति-
रूपा एकधाप्येकादशधा भवति ॥ ८२ ॥

82. ALTHOUGH FUNDAMENTALLY ONE, DIVINE LOVE HAS THE FOLLOWING ELEVEN TYPES: (1) ATTACHMENT TO VIRTUE AND GLORY; (2) ATTACHMENT TO FORM; (3) ATTACHMENT TO ADORATION; (4) ATTACHMENT TO REMEMBRANCE; (5) ATTACHMENT AS SERVANT; (6) ATTACHMENT AS A FRIEND; (7) ATTACHMENT AS A WIFE; (8) ATTACHMENT AS PARENTS; (9) SELF-SURRENDER; (10) ABSORPTION IN MEDITATION; AND (11) SUPREME ANGUISH OF SEPARATION.

Mahātmās who reach the highest stage of perfection in Divine Love possess all these eleven types of attachment as the Gopīs of Vraja did, who have been already cited as examples by the Devarṣi. If all these forms of attachment cannot be developed together;

one has to select one or two sentiments from them and cultivate that type of Love for God. Love is fundamentally one; therefore, no distinction of high and low should be made among devotees, according to the differences of sentiment cultivated by them.

There have been innumerable devotees, who worshipped God according to these sentiments. Only a few names are cited by way of illustration:-

(1) Attachment to virtue and glory - Ḍevarṣi Nārada, Maharṣi Vedavyāsa, Śukadeva, Yajñavalkya, Kākabhuśuṇḍi, Śeṣa, Sūta, Śaunaka, Śāṇḍilya, Bhīṣma, Arjuna, Parīkṣit, Pṛthu, Janamejaya, etc.

(2) Attachment to Form - Men and women of Mithila, Janaka, the Ṛṣis of Daṇḍakāranya, the women of Vraja.

(3) Attachment to Adoration - Śrī Lakṣmi, Pṛthu, Ambarīṣa, Śrī Bharata, etc.

(4) Attachment to Remembrance - Prahlāda, Dhruva, Sanaka, etc.

(5) Attachment as servant - Śrī Hanumān, Akrūra, Vidura, etc.

(6) Attachment as friend - Arjunā, Uddhava, Sanjaya, Śrīdāmā, Sudāmā, etc.

(7) Attachment as wife - The eight principal queens, etc.

(8) Attachment as parents - Kaśyapa-Aditi, Sutapā-Pṛśni, Manu-Śatarūpā,Daśaratha-Kauśalyā, Nanda-Yaśodā, Vāsudeva-Devakī, etc.

(9) Self-surrender - Śrī Hanumān,Ambarīṣa, Bali, Bibhīṣaṇa, Śibi, etc.

(10) Absorption in meditation - Yajñavalkya, Śuka, Sanaka and other wise men, and Munis like Kauṇḍinya, Sutīkṣṇa, etc.

(11) Supreme anguish of separation - Uddhava, Arjuna, men and women of Vraja.

All these eleven types of Divine Love were found developed among the Gopīs. It should not, however, be inferred that the other names mentioned above possessed only one or two types of Devotion. The names have been classified according to the predominance of the type of sentiment in the devotees.

इत्येवं वदन्ति जनजल्पनिर्भया एकमताः
कुमारव्यासशुकशाण्डिल्यगर्गविष्णुकौण्डिन्यशेषोद्ध-
वारुणिबलिहनुमद्विभीषणादयो भक्त्याचार्याः ॥८३॥

83. ALL THE ĀCHĀRYAS (TEACHERS) OF BHAKTI LIKE KUMĀRA (SANATKUMĀRA AND OTHERS); VEDAVYĀSA, SHUKADEVA, SHĀṆḌILYA, GARGA, VISHṆU, KAUṆḌINYA, SHESHA, UDDHAVA, ĀRUṆĪ, BALI, HANŪMĀN, BIBHĪSHAṆA, ETC. WITHOUT CARING FOR POPULAR PRAISE OR BLAME, UNANIMOUSLY DECLARE THIS (THAT BHAKTI IS THE BEST PATH).

Giving the reference of other principal teachers of the path of Bhakti Devarṣi Nārada strengthens his own point of view. The names he cites were those of the Masters and Āchāryas of Bhakti (Devotion). Sanatkumāra is constantly engaged in the Japa of the Mantra 'हरिः शरणम्' (Refuge to Śrī Hari) and is one of the pioneers in the path of Bhakti. Through his eighteen Purāṇas Śrī Vedavyāsa has declared Bhakti to be the principal path, and his Bhāgavata is the very mind of Bhakti. How is the Devotion of Śukadeva to be described? The Bhāgavata which deals primarily with Bhakti is an ocean of nectar which emanated from his lips. The aphorisms on Bhakti by Śāṇḍilya establishes him as an Āchārya in the path of Bhakti. Through the Garga-Saṃhitā of Maharṣi Garga runs Bhakti as a flowing stream. Maharṣi Viṣṇu was a reputed author of Smṛti. There was a Viṣṇuswamī, who was the Āchārya of the famous Vaiṣṇava sect of that name. Kauṇḍinya is held to have attained perfection through the practice of absorption in meditation.

(7) Attachment as wife - The eight principal queens, etc.

(8) Attachment as parents - Kaśyapa-Aditi, Sutapā-Pṛśni, Manu-Śatarūpā, Daśaratha-Kauśalyā, Nanda-Yaśodā, Vāsudeva-Devakī, etc.

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All these eleven types of Divine Love were found developed among the Gopīs. It should not, however, be inferred that the other names mentioned above possessed only one or two types of Devotion. The names have been classified according to the predominance of the type of sentiment in the devotees.

इत्येवं वदन्ति जनजल्पनिर्भया एकमताः
कुमारव्यासशुकशाण्डिल्यगर्गविष्णुकौण्डिन्यशेषोद्धव-
वारुणिबलिहनुमद्विभीषणादयो भक्त्याचार्याः ॥८३॥

83. ALL THE ĀCHĀRYAS (TEACHERS) OF BHAKTI LIKE KUMĀRA (SANATKUMĀRA AND OTHERS); VEDAVYĀSA, SHUKADEVA, SHĀṆḌILYA, GARGA, VISHṆU, KAUṆḌINYA, SHESHA, UDDHAVA, ARUṆĪ, BALI, HANŪMĀN, BIBHĪSHAṆA, ETC. WITHOUT CARING FOR POPULAR PRAISE OR BLAME, UNANIMOUSLY DECLARE THIS (THAT BHAKTI IS THE BEST PATH).

Giving the reference of other principal teachers of the path of Bhakti Devarṣi Nārada strengthens his own point of view. The names he cites were those of the Masters and Āchāryas of Bhakti (Devotion). Sanatkumāra is constantly engaged in the Japa of the Mantra ' हरिः शरणम् ' (Refuge to Śrī Hari) and is one of the pioneers in the path of Bhakti. Through his eighteen Purāṇas Śrī Vedavyāsa has declared Bhakti to be the principal path, and his Bhāgavata is the very mind of Bhakti. How is the Devotion of Śukadeva to be described? The Bhāgavata which deals primarily with Bhakti is an ocean of nectar which emanated from his lips. The aphorisms on Bhakti by Śāṇḍilya establishes him as an Āchārya in the path of Bhakti. Through the Garga-Saṃhitā of Maharṣi Garga runs Bhakti as a flowing stream. Maharṣi Viṣṇu was a reputed author of Smṛti. There was a Viṣṇuswamī, who was the Āchārya of the famous Vaiṣṇava sect of that name. Kauṇḍinya is held to have attained perfection through the practice of absorption in meditation.

Lord Śeṣa is engaged day and night in singing the praises of Srī Hari through his thousand tongues. He is the supreme Teacher of the servant-sentiment. It was He who incarnated as Lakṣmaṇa to serve the Lord. Uddhava was the most intimate friend of Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Aruṇi is held to be the other name of Nimbarka, who was a worshipper of the dual Form (Śrī Rādhā and Śrī Kṛṣṇa), Bali was the very embodiment of the sentiment of self-surrender, moved by his Devotion God had to undertake the duty of a watchman at his gate. The servant-sentiment of Hanumān, the chief of devotees, is well-known to all. It was through his Devotion that the great soul, Bibhīṣaṇa, earned the friendship of Lord Śrī Rāmachandra. All these Āchāryas of Bhakti, without caring for the praise or blame of the people, have sung the praises of Bhakti. Through the examples of their lives they have established the supremacy of Bhakti. Strengthened by their support, Devarṣi Nārada fearlessly sounds the trumpet of Bhakti.

य इदं नारदप्रोक्तं शिवानुशासनं विश्वसिति
श्रद्धत्ते स प्रेष्ठं लभते स प्रेष्ठं लभत इति ॥८४॥

84. HE WHO BELIEVES AND RESPECTS THIS TEACHING OF SHIVA ENUNCIATED BY NARADA ATTAINS THE BELOVED, HE POSITIVELY ATTAINS THE BELOVED.

After giving his exposition of Devotion, the author now describes its fruit. The Devarṣi says that he who believes and respects these holy teachings originally laid down by the first Teacher of Bhakti, Lord Śiva, and elaborated by Devarṣi Nārada, attains God in the form of the 'Beloved'. Without faith and reverence nothing can be attained. The doubting soul inevitably perishes - ' संशयात्मा विनश्यति (गीता ४ । ४०) '. Practice of a discipline is possible for one who possesses faith and reverence, therefore Bhakti (Devotion) should be practised with faith and reverence. Through the practice of other forms of discipline, God is realized in other forms, but through the practice of Devotion, He is realized as the 'Beloved'. This Divine Love is the supreme, or fifth Purusartha (object of attainment), which involves even the renunciation of the desire for salvation (Mokṣa). It is the highest object of attainment.

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After giving the exposition of devotion the author now describes its fruit. The Supreme good [illegible] be [illegible] believes and [illegible] originally [illegible] down [illegible] the [illegible] of [illegible], Lord Śiva, and [illegible] makes God in the form of the 'beloved'. Without faith and [illegible] nothing can be [illegible]. The [illegible] perfection [illegible] is possible [illegible] faith and reverence [illegible] should be practised with faith and reverence. [illegible] of discipline, [illegible] forms, [illegible] through the [illegible] devotion. He is realised as the [illegible] The Divine Love is the [illegible] of [illegible] of contemplation [illegible] of the [illegible]. It is the highest object of [illegible]